REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT RHETORIC:

INVESTIGATING ORGANIZATIONAL

PRACTICES OF EMPOWERMENT

by

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A dissertation submitted to the faculty of
The University of Utah
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Communication

The University of Utah

August 2016

The University of Utah Graduate School

STATEMENT OF DISSERTATION APPROVAL

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ABSTRACT

With ongoing global conflicts raging and new struggles erupting every year, humanitarian organizations and resettlement agencies must continue to generate new insight into the refugee resettlement process and empowerment programs. Refugee resettlement in the United States is organized around a well-established system of non-profit and governmental collaboration. This study takes a critical approach to exploring the social construction of empowerment, technology, and resettlement by adopting ethnographic, rhetorical field methods in order to interrogate the *in situ* discourses and practices that participate in the social construction and embodiment of empowerment. Further, the critical implications of this study suggests that empowerment should be approached from a more inclusive stance, challenging the hegemonic valorization of economic independence, entrepreneurialism, and ableism implicated within empowerment rhetoric. Chapter 4 discusses the ways that discourses and practices create tensions in resettlement organizations, while Chapter 5 identifies the ways that empowerment representations assist and resist economic-centered representations that reinforce the importance of global imperial capitalism. Finally, this study outlines a crystalline view of empowerment that embraces emergent, lived tensions, and contingent performances of empowerment. Inspired by Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) rhizomatic approach and Tracy and Trethewey's (2001) crystallized identity, crystalline empowerment is a metaphor for the organic, perspectival, and nonlinear texture of a more

productive conceptualization of empowerment. In sum, viewing empowerment as tension filled and multifaceted provides a practical vocabulary that acts as a starting point for conceptualizing alternative goals and interpretations of successful resettlement.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project would not have been possible without the support and guidance of some key individuals and organizations. The support I received from so many members of the Communication Department's faculty, staff, and graduate students assisted in the production, criticism, and refinement of these ideas. Their perspective and willingness to listen sent me home thinking over new ideas and coming back with more well thought out responses. Additionally, my sincerest thank you to the participants at the Global Refugee Agency who took time from their busy schedules to talk with me, teach me things, and be my friend. Your perspectives and encouragement made this project possible.

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my dissertation chair and advisor, Dr. Heather Canary. Through countless hurdles, her consultation and insight was always exactly what I needed to keep going at that moment. Dr. Canary has challenged me, encouraged me, and inspired me. She is not only an incredible encyclopedia of knowledge and logistical organizational genius, but more importantly, she is a compassionate and wonderful person.

I am also very grateful to my committee, Dr. Danielle Endres, Dr. Jenny Andrus, Dr. Rob Gehl, and Dr. Joy Pierce, for their seemingly endless patience and continual contributions and feedback. Each of their unique expertise in rhetorical field methods, post/neocolonialism, rhetoric and agency, critical/cultural studies, and new media provided for a greater depth in analysis. The committee also played an incredible role in

supporting me professionally and helping develop my greater research trajectory.

In addition, thank you to Dr. Michael Middleton for his advice and support during all of the difficult moments during the program. I would also like to express my gratitude for the friendship and support of the entire John R. Park Debate Society and Utah Forensics students and coaching staff; you have been a family to me.

Not least of all, thank you to my partner Ben for helping me survive and celebrate. You have sacrificed your time and energy to help me reach this point and I am eternally grateful for all of your consistent support and encouragement.

CHAPTER 1

STUDYING RESETTLEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT FROM THE FIELD

The public conversation about refugee resettlement has resulted in a variety of reactions ranging from outrage, to sympathy, to concern for local host communities and a general anxiety over the "Muslim colonization of America," as *Right Side News* (2015) phrases it. U.S. Representative Trey Gowdy's letter to the Secretary of State concerning the planned opening of a resettlement office in his district reignited a national conversation about the impact of refugee communities on local community resources (Hohmann, 2015). A multitude of different opinions circulate within "host" communities that are less public or widely accessible. The debate about refugee quotas has maintained the issue of resettlement as a constant fixture of discussion and debate.

Although sometimes unnoticed or ignored, refugee communities are ubiquitous in the United States. In fact, in 2014, the United States resettled almost 70,000 refugees, the majority coming from Burma, Bhutan, Cuba, The Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, and Somalia (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2015). While Iraqi refugees account for the largest nationality resettled in 2014 at over 19,000 people, only 132 Syrians were approved for resettlement in the U.S. that year (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2015). The term refugee has been often taken for granted as a kind of "natural category;" however, it reflects a social and political designation that exists in a

particular political and economic context, implying dependence on humanitarian intervention and the rupture of traditional social, economic, and cultural relations (Black, 2001). Refugees make up a small but significant portion of the population. National refugee and asylum policies have been criticized by political leaders and humanitarian leaders, including President Barack Obama, for creating too many hurdles for those suffering in war-torn countries (Gearan, 2013; Newland, 2015), while public and media rhetoric has been indicted for the tendency to construct refugees as terrorist threats, burdens, freeloaders, and as generalized others (KhosraviNik, 2010). On the other hand, organizations such as the Global Refugee Agency (GRA; pseudonym), the organizational context of this study, which are charged with resettling refugees into local communities employ very different rhetoric aimed at promoting empowerment, independence, and self-sufficiency.

One thing is clear, rhetorics and institutional logics of resettlement participate in systems of material inequality by mobilizing strategic representations of refugees affected by conflict, political persecution, and violence (McKinnon, 2011). Institutional logics are systems of beliefs and values that reproduce through the prescription of legitimate ideas and practices (Tan & Wang, 2010). Empowerment and resettlement discourses for instance, imply institutional logics that resist xenophobia through particular representations. Xenophobic rhetoric can reflect and reproduce paranoid fears of non-national bodies that reify old colonial legacies of civilization and law and order, while ultimately engineering a society of exclusion and otherness (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2006; Svirsky & Bignall, 2012). While research indicates that discourse within news media is often dehumanizing and constructs refugees as burdens and threats to national

security (KhosraviNik, 2010), little attention has been paid to the fragments of discourses and nontextual forms of rhetoric that can influence organizational relationships with the community. Although important work has been done to problematize constructions of refugees in the media and public discourse (Bagenda & Hovil, 2003; Black, 2001; Chu, 2008; KhosraviNik, 2010; Svirsky & Bignall, 2012; Vasta, 2007), very little research has addressed the rhetorical implications of organizational policies, internal performances, and practices aimed at resettling refugees as members of Western society. Even less is known about how these policies and practices construct the refugee community and how they structure relationships within the organization, the state, and between and among refugees. This study is a result of participant ethnography at a branch of one of the world's largest refugee resettlement and aid organizations, The Global Refugee Agency, to discern organizational discourses and practices that construct formations of empowerment and disempowerment. The refugee resettlement organization that is the focus of this study currently operates in forty different countries, serving over 10,000 refugees in the local community.

Organizational theories of social construction are particularly useful to a rhetorical analysis of organizational communication because social constructions are a product of rhetoric and discourse. Schneider and Ingram (1993) contend that social constructions play an important role in the policy process in at least two ways. First, discursive representations of target populations that circulate in the vernacular of policymakers (or organizational members) can impact the creation of policy in important ways. For example, the discourse that precipitates a policy may reflect a socially constructed problem and blame this on some behavior of the target population that the

policy attempts to influence. Constructions of refugees as violent extremists within quota policies are a clear example of this. Additionally, "social constructions become embedded in policy as messages that are absorbed by citizens and affect their orientation and participation patterns" (Schneider & Ingram, 1993, p. 334). In this way, policy text and the social environment in which it arises are interdependent on the other in so far as one may define the characteristics of the other.

Furthermore, research has shown that policies focusing on assimilation and integration can simultaneously undermine cultural diversity (Chu, 2007; Kelly, 2014). For instance, policies meant to integrate Native American communities into the economy as a way of fighting poverty had a detrimental effect on their ability to control and preserve indigenous languages and traditions (Kelly, 2014). In fact, policies that emphasize assimilation may even deepen societal divisions by promoting discourses of multiculturalism that fail to recognize how Western values may hegemonically undermine and compete with different perspectives (Vasta, 2007). Discourses of multiculturalism ignore the disparate systems of power that privilege certain cultural traditions and values over others (Vasta, 2007). Thus, it is necessary to study the implications of refugee resettlement rhetoric in order to identify discourses that give meaning to empowerment.

The following chapter examines key theoretical concepts that provide a foundation for critically analyzing representations of empowerment within an international humanitarian organization. Next, Chapter 2 discusses relevant research in critical rhetoric, refugee studies, postcolonial and neocolonial literature, and critical organizational communication studies that address sensitizing concepts regarding refugee

resettlement, humanitarian gendered discourse, *in situ* rhetoric and technology as a tool of and against hegemonic power structures. Chapter 3, explains rhetorical field methods as a unique and complementary approach to studying policy processes and practices at the Global Refugee Agency.

This project is concerned with interrogating traditional organizational texts as well as *in situ* rhetorics of resettlement that emerge from the practices and discourses within one resettlement agency. *In situ* rhetoric may be defined as the "processual forms of rhetorical action that are accessible only through participatory methods" (Middleton, Endres & Senda-Cook, 2011, p. 387). For example, Conquergood (1988) who was employed as a health worker, analyzed the way that health parades in a Hmong refugee camp used culturally significant symbols such as the dragon, and how performances by the Mother health figure elicited a positive response from the people living in the camp. This escapes the text-centric tendencies of rhetoric to only analyze written or discursive elements of rhetoric. Indeed, rhetorical constructions of imaginary geographies and countries of nationality have a direct impact on refugee and asylum policy in the West (McKinnon, 2011). Western humanitarian rhetoric tends to dehistoricize conflict and whitewash the culpability of the Global North in creating a world of precarity (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013). Chapters 4 and 5 present results of the analysis. The analysis: 1) identifies tensions which are experienced discursively and materially in refugee empowerment programs and 2) explores representations of entrepreneurial and consumer-based empowerment and their implications within larger systems of power and imperialism. The discussion and conclusions in Chapter 6 presents the concept of *crystalline empowerment* to connect a tension centered approach with a view of

empowerment that prioritizes organic, contingent interpretations while identifying practical opportunities for inclusion and agency in resettlement contexts.

A rhetorical field methods (RFM) approach directly responds to Norander and Harter's (2011) call to unmask colonial discourse by exploring "actual organizing practices" (p. 75) through analysis of the lived experiences, mundane discourses, embodied performances, and extra-linguistic aspects of rhetoric that are only recently being recognized as an integral part of the field (Middleton, Endres & Senda-Cook, 2011; Hess, 2011). Using rhetorical field methods provides a way of analyzing both discursive and nondiscursive rhetorical elements of the resettlement process, employing critical ethnographic methods such as observation, interviewing, and intervention to allow for a rhetorical reading of nondiscursive events, spaces, practices, and interactions (Hess, 2011).

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter examines prior research on rhetorics of refugee resettlement, postcolonial theories of resistance and agency, and organizational communication and tension theories, before addressing technology and empowerment and the need for a rhetorical field methods approach to interrogate the significance of nontraditional forms of organizational "texts." The following synthesis of relevant research is aimed at providing some context for exploring the ways that a postcolonial agenda challenges some forms of critical theory, feminism, and poststructuralism within organizational communication studies (Mumby & Stohl, 2007). The following sections will address (1) organizational and postcolonial theory, disposability and decolonization, (2) rhetorical agency and empowerment, (3) dominant discourses regarding refugees, and (4) possibilities and challenges related to technological resistance.

Organizational and Postcolonial Rhetoric

At the intersection of organizational communication and postcolonial scholarship, a focus on rhetoric may be concerned with four problematics that are generative for this analysis: voice, rationality, organization as a discursive practice, and the relationship between the organization and society (Mumby & Stohl, 1996; 2007; Stohl & Cheney,

2001). This project responds to these problematics by raising questions of empowerment, which entail a discussion of voice and agency, while a rhetorical view of the organization brings into focus the privilege of Western rationalities and organizing practices. Postcolonial rhetorical theory is uniquely advantageous as an approach to organizational communication studies in that it has the potential to account for materiality as well as discursive systems of power (Prasad, 2003). A postcolonial approach to organizational rhetoric provides for an analysis of the material power dynamics as they have evolved throughout history and within contextual and interlocking systems of power. This makes all the more relevant the rhetorical strategies that both reify and subvert colonial legacies.

Although organizational communication as a field has examined the processes and organizations focused on social change, it has been largely from a Western perspective that neglects the socio-historical conditions addressed by postcolonial scholars such as Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, and Homi Bhabha, among many others (Broadfoot & Munshi, 2007; Grimes & Parker, 2008; Mumby & Stohl, 2007). Considering that international organizations transcend national boundaries and "provide for the establishment of institutional machinery, procedures, and norms to facilitate cooperation among members" (Stohl, 1993, p. 378), they are particularly unique sites of diverse identities, discourses, and beliefs that can be better situated by taking a historical and political postcolonial perspective. This discussion will review postcolonialism as (1) an historical, relational, and intersectional approach to representations of inequality, (2) an emphasis on resistance and decolonization, and (3) a theoretical framework that accounts for gendered forms of rhetorical and material oppression.

Historical and Relational Intersectionality

First, postcolonial theory provides a much needed historical contextualization of the power relations and hegemonic systems at work within the environments that transnational and international organizations operate. It is clear that organizations cannot be divorced from the context they originate and work within, and postcolonial theory provides a way of accounting for the historically contingent systems of power that help explain *why* colonial conditions exist, and *how* they are "undone and redone" (Shome & Hedge, 2002, p. 250). Postcolonialism can be understood as a relationship between "Westerners" and "non-Westerners" that is accomplished through both discursive and material practices that implicitly and explicitly privilege Western norms and standards (Narayan, 1997; Norander & Harter, 2011). For instance, geopolitical relationships between the Global North and conflicts in the Global South account for significant differences in the gendering of refugees within official resettlement rhetoric of the state (McKinnon, 2011).

Although colonialism is generally the manifestation of power via settler and military occupation, the "seizing, delimiting, and asserting control over a geographical area – of writing on the ground a new set of social and spatial relations" can be accomplished discursively to produce exteriority, or, in this case, selective inclusion (Mbembe, 1999, p. 25). Homi Bhaba (1994) defines colonial discourse as an apparatus of power that "turns on the recognition and disavowal of racial/cultural/historical differences. Its predominant strategic function is the creation of a space for a subject people through the production of knowledges in terms of knowledges by the colonizer

and colonized which are stereotypically but antithetically evaluated" (Bhaba, 1994, p. 23). This relational and discursive view of power furnishes an analysis of postcolonial subjects and conditions as they emerge from spaces and cultures that were once occupied and thus transformed by Western nations. Colonial discourses still function today which are predicated on exclusion and the privileging of Western identities and norms above non-Western voices in the Global South or the imaginary geographies of the "Orient" (Said, 1977, p. 20). Thus power within postcolonialism is a material and discursive relationship requiring the historical contextualization of dominant cultures and those that are othered by Western norms.

McKinnon (2011) argues that the state uses the rhetorical positioning of refugee experiences to benefit itself. Rhetoric on women's asylum constructs some women as "other" who, "because of their identities and experiences, can be received as refugees, but are received via appropriation for what their reception signifies about the nation-state" (McKinnon, 2011, p. 195). Refugees are rhetorically constructed by hegemonic power structures, such as colonialism, which positions non-U.S. individuals in accordance with gendered and geopolitical expectations to justify their refugee status, deny Western participation in root causes of conflict, and/or reinforce gendered and racist stereotypes (McKinnon, 2011). Furthermore, although many resettlement policies are intended to protect and assimilate refugees, this may come at the expense of their empowerment (Chu, 2007; Kelly, 2014). These conditions of power involve a specific colonial governmentality that Mbembe calls the "management of the multitudes" which is concerned with immobilizing or spatially fixing or dispersing populations, refugee camps being one of the ways that neocolonial powers manage the multitudes. Svirsky and

Bignall (2013) point out that colonialism is no longer identified by its boots-on-the-ground tactics, but rather through the discursive privileging and rationalizing of Western control over the Global South.

As a discourse, Orientalism engages in the construction of imaginary geographies that position the Occident as culturally superior and diametrically opposed to the Orient (Said, 1985). Justifying and rationalizing the allocation of resources and the creation of development programs often invokes characterizations of the Global South and the Orient as backwards, violent, and inherently primitive (Cloud 2004; Said, 1985). International women's rights organizations and their members may reveal an Orientalist discourse through Islamophobic rhetoric or other representations that demean and otherize indigenous people. Islamophobia refers to "hostility toward Islam and Muslims that tends to dehumanize an entire faith, portraying it as fundamentally alien and attributing to its followers an inherent, essential set of negative traits, such as irrationality, intolerance and violence" (Rendall & Macdonald, 2008, p. 16). Racist anxieties cooperate with colonial discourses within what Edward Said (1985) discusses as a *strategic formation*, or the way that texts and discourse are related to each other in order to cultivate various dimensions of an Orientalist authority. I argue that these strategic formations operate rhetorically and can involve Western based practices, performances, and other strategically symbolic aspects of the colonial formation.

Disposability and Dispossession in Refugee Communities

The concept of disposability is useful in assessing the way that rhetoric constructs, legitimizes, and dismisses precarity while justifying dispossession. Butler and Athanasiou (2013) theorize discourses of disposability that construct certain populations

as precarious in nature, such as refugees, which is useful in analyzing institutionalized forms of violence that can be enacted, perpetuated, or promoted through organizational policy. Dispossession is both discursive and material, forcibly separating individuals from their means of cultural and physical survival. While refugee resettlement aims to remediate the forcible physical dispossession that prevents individuals from living in their home countries, dispossession is also a problem of subjective and epistemic violence, and discursive and affective appropriations (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013, p. 26). In other words, social constructions of the refugee as burdensome and threatening can shape rhetorical formations that act violently on refugee communities.

On the other hand, the notion of dispossession is aporetic, or inherently paradoxical (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013). While forcible dispossession is violent, self-dispossession is empowering. Dispossessing the self to the other recognizes the limits of autonomous self-sufficiency assigned to the liberal subject through its fundamental dependency and relationality (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013). Discourses of vulnerability and interdependency among humanity are empowering strategies that call into question the logic of possession, which Butler and Athanasiou argue is the hallmark of modernity, liberalism and capitalism. The idea of rendering the self as vulnerable to the other as an act of radical resistance is useful in critically analyzing the way humanitarian rhetoric can simultaneously empower refugees and those individuals working on their behalf.

The Struggle for Decolonization

Next, postcolonial theory offers rhetoricians a useful and pragmatic discussion of resistance, agency and voice as part of the project of decolonization (Shome & Hedge, 2002). This section will discuss rhetorical resistance as an intersectional struggle that can

be intervened upon through strategic essentialism, hybridity, mimicry, and indeterminism. These four concepts are generative theoretical starting points for an analysis of rhetorical resistance to recolonization.

Decolonization is an intersectional struggle that takes into account the interconnectedness of hegemonic systems of power (Mohanty, 2003). Some feminist postcolonial scholars argue that a politics aimed at feminist solidarity and enacted through self-determination and autonomy has the ability to replace colonial legacies with self-reflective collective practices (Mohanty, 2003). From a rhetorical standpoint, resistance can be conceptualized as individual, micro-political practices and discursive formations, as well as reified in the collective action and organizational processes and discourses of transnational networks. Fleming and Spicer's (2008) notion of struggle is useful, as it recognizes that oppression cannot be reduced into a simple binary of power and resistance, or oppressed and oppressor. Rather, this study focuses on the intersection of power and resistance as they produce complex and contradictory dynamics (Fleming & Spicer, 2008; Mumby, 2005). As Dingo and Scott (2012) note, a rhetoric of empowerment and decontextualized individualism may promote agency while also serving colonialist ends by constructing the "need" of the Third World as entirely divorced from the broader context of that need. Rather, postcolonial analysis offers a way of situating organizations and their representations and politics within the struggle of global and interconnected power structures that shape economic, political, social, and very material circumstances.

For example, Amartya Sen's (1985) notion of "capability-deprivation" complicates colonialist and neoliberal assumptions by emphasizing the lasting material

effect of historical economic relations on marginalized populations. These types of analyses call attention to the effects of globalization and neoliberalism, whereby resistance itself is subject to the same systems of power. With this approach, Dingo and Scott (2012) critique Cooperative Relief for Assistance Everywhere's, (also known as CARE; the world's largest humanitarian organization), construction of resistance as donation, reinforces "the notion of personal agency and monetary exchange over a broader understanding of the transnational contexts and relationships that make donations, charity work, and development programs necessary in the first place" (p. 184). In other words, without a consideration of the implications of globalization and neoliberalism, organizational rhetoric fails to account for much of the sociopolitical conditions that create the economic inequality and raison d'etre for the humanitarian organization.

One possibility for rhetorical resistance that is accessible to postcolonial subjectivities is strategic essentialism (Spivak, 1996). Strategic essentialism involves the appropriation of essentialist discourse to use against the dominant in ways that promote the inclusion of subaltern populations (Spivak, 1996). Rather than dismantling or deconstructing norms and "truths," postcolonial subjects may make appeals to a common identity in order to empower themselves. For instance, Syrians have used strategic essentialism to strategically invoke a single ethnic heritage connected to the Golan Heights to protest Israel's occupation within international forums (Svirsky & Bignall, 2012). In some cases, coalescing around identities to achieve specific goals can enable significant political victories.

Further, hybridity and mimicry are two ways of mobilizing contingent solutions

and subjectivities against imperialism. The concept of mimicry is one significant intersection between Butler's theory of performativity and postcolonialism, where the repetition of norms with difference can disrupt the binaries of the colonial imaginary (Jeffress, 2008). While Bhabha does not provide extensive detail on the role of performativity in mimicry, he does explain how hybrid subjectivities can be transformative and subversive (Bahba, 1994; Jeffress, 2008). Considering that postcolonialism is concerned with materiality and space, hybridity is a subjectivity that develops in response to these material conditions and can be enacted spatially. The hybridity of the immigrant is not a threat "by being out of place"; but rather because it alters the nature and relations that occur in these places (Jeffress, 2008, p. 34). Franz Fanon's poetry of liberation is an example of how hybridity can function rhetorically to resist dominant colonial power (Bhaba, 1994). Fanon's writing recognizes and works within the parameters of colonialism, while still not conforming to the passive colonial subject position and thus illustrating "the leaden, deadening prose of the colonized world" (Bhaba, 1994, p. 41). In this way, hybridity can operate as a form of resistance. However, it is important to note that mimicry is not always transformative and can reify colonial power. Spivak's (1996) example of this is the United States mimicking the native by installing Hamid Karzai, who was trained and educated in the West, as President of Afghanistan.

Finally, indeterminacy is a source of resistance where exposure of colonial interests and discourses of oppression can challenge dominant systems of power (Bhaba, 1994). The indeterminacy of discourse is a source of resistance because it marks "conflictual yet productive spaces in which the arbitrariness of the sign of cultural

signification emerges within the regulated boundaries of social discourse" (Bhaba, 1994, p. 479). A recognition of indeterminacy in rhetoric and language does not negate intentionality, but it does complicate questions of intent and motivation. This indeterminacy is what allows appropriation, mimicry, and hybridity to be transformational, yet it also directs the critic to look for resistance in spaces and meanings under contestation.

Gendered Humanitarian Rhetoric

Finally, postcolonial scholars acknowledge that international humanitarian organizations are susceptible to gendered Orientalist discourses, colonial impulses, and self-justifying interests (Vestergaard, 2013). For instance, humanitarian organizations can and do participate in constructing representations of women from the Global South as a homogenous, oppressed "Third World" group in contrast to the Western feminist standards that legitimize their existence and funding (Mohanty, 1984; Quraishi, 2011). This is a form of discursive colonization, invoking an "ethnocentric universalist" approach to social justice that carries with it the "authorizing signature of the West" (p. 336). The colonizing impulses of the past again manifest themselves through the rationale to act as both judge and savior of the non-Western body. Quraishi (2011) succinctly summarizes the wrench in contemporary political efforts to end violence against women:

> Western feminists today, of course, do not imagine their mission as a new colonialist invasion of Muslim lands, but they are largely unaware of the colonialist echoes in many of their strategies. That is, although today's international women's rights advocates are generally motivated by a genuine desire to improve women's lives and not by a desire to re-colonize the Muslim world, the imagery they invoke has not drastically changed (p. 17).

Indeed, women's oppression in the Global South has been and continues to be used as a

marker of cultural inferiority within a broader discourse of Orientalism (Cloud, 2004). This is what Said (1977) describes as a disposition towards cultural "others" that attempts to know them.

However, rhetorical practices that are often left out of traditional textual rhetorical analyses may be sites of feminist resistance. For example, the feminine semiotic elements of rhetoric that are often neglected in symbolic patriarchal frameworks include "the aural, vocal, or physical qualities in language, such as rhythm, stress, echo, silence and so on, that inform and can disrupt 'literal' signification, and thus by creating uncertainty, ambivalence, and paradox, destabilize meaning" (Montgomery, 2000, p. 34). This is what Montgomery (2000) calls the "maternal voice" that is aligned with an interrogation of colonial discourses. Although literary criticism and rhetorical criticism extend two different traditions and genres, work like Montgomery's speaks to some aspects of rhetoric that may be taken up in productive ways.

Today, postcolonial feminist scholars such as Mohanty (1984; 2003), Shome and Hedge (1996; 2002), Brown (2003), Bedford and Rai (2010), and many others have rightfully highlighted the impact of capitalism on women and minorities of the Third World/Global South. Postcolonial scholarship offers organizational rhetoricians concerned with social justice the opportunity to situate collective feminist resistance against historically oppressive political and economic agendas that have otherwise been absent from traditional rhetorical analyses. This study complicates the way that decoloniality and "empowerment" may be represented as a linear process that occurs similarly and predictably for everyone in every place and context. Refugee resettlement organizations exist in culturally liminal spaces, in which traditional postcolonial relations

are replicated, subverted, and transformed in unique and complex ways.

Rhetorical Agency

In order to evaluate empowerment rhetoric, it is necessary to provide a theoretical foundation for understanding agency. The differences, similarities, and overlap between rhetorical and discursive agency have been largely unaddressed in prior scholarship. The contrasts arise from different professional or disciplinary traditions that focus on different units of analysis. However, both rhetorical and discursive agency may be used in conjunction to interrogate different dimensions of agency as it is manifested within language and in the absence of language, as well as within the extra-linguistic features of rhetoric, such as space, place, performances and rituals, and nonverbal forms of communication.

First, discursive agency can be defined as a "linguistic act with consequences," whereas rhetorical agency may be defined as a symbolic act with consequence (Butler, 1997, p. 7; Medina, 2006). While discursive agency interrogates the dimensions of language such as instances of talk, writing, or linguistic communication in some other form, rhetorical agency is a broader concept. Discursive agency is one aspect of rhetorical agency, focusing on language as only one element of rhetoric. The benefit of using these definitions to understand agency is first that the study of rhetorical agency must necessarily consider both discourse and other symbolic and performative forms of communication. Additionally, these definitions acknowledge that discourse and rhetoric have material impacts, without constricting a theorization of agency to one that must meet a certain threshold for causal effects or intentionality.

Often disciplinary boundaries influence the use of discursive agency and/or

rhetorical agency. Discourse analysts especially those using critical discourse analysis (CDA), have used analytical categories from rhetoric, such as genre, while rhetoric has yet to examine concepts from CDA, such as discursive agency (Johnstone & Eisenhart, 2008). Discourse studies that include a focus on agency have a professional tradition of analyzing both micro and macro (sometimes meso and meta) discursive features. Micro-discursive elements refer to the actual linguistic expressions of individuals, such as gendered language and presuppositions, while these are linked to macro-discourses that are embedded within particular ideological stances (Johnstone, 2008; LeGreco & Tracy, 2009). Discourses are worth differentiating from discursive qualities. Discourses, according to Foucault (1978), are systems of meaning which convey knowledge and information about a certain subject through language. Discursive agency then, is a type of agency, or way of effecting change through language. Thus, professional boundaries between rhetoric and linguistics have cultivated different ideas of rhetorical and discursive agency, both of which are compatible with one another.

The second major element that distinguishes rhetorical agency from discursive agency is the unit of analysis. Rhetorical agency hinges on the use of strategy and value-laden communicative choices, while discursive agency is characterized by a "close, rigorous attention to language" that evaluates the way linguistics, syntax, semantics, languages, conversations and paragraphs are used to effect change. For instance, Andrus (2011) looks at courtroom discourse and how it recontextualizes utterances to change their meaning and consequences. The unit of analysis is the sequence of language, its repetition, and other linguistic features that occur during actual interactions, exchanges, and texts. Discursive agency focuses on how *linguistic choices,* such as where to place

quotation marks and which words may be left out of textual or semantic reproductions, can constrain or enable the ability for others to speak, be heard, and open up potentialities for change. Rhetorical agency, on the other hand, evaluates how a myriad of rhetorical choices work in concert within a specific context to produce a strategic response, worldview, approach or ideologically bound perspective. Context can be understood as "matrices" of co-occurring or invoked texts, actions and utterances (Andrus, 2011). The constantly shifting construct of agency represents the mutually influential relationship between text and context and the inability to isolate them. The text does not constitute context, while context cannot make up the text in its entirety (Andrus, 2011). There is no separating the two, they are embedded in one another and thus they must be evaluated within the situation that it is produced (Andrus, 2011). Thus, rhetorical and discursive agency can be productively analyzed together in a way that may produce a clearer theorization of the relationship between discursive agency and the ability to effect change in other symbolic or rhetorical ways.

Medina (2006) theorizes discursive agency as a tension between context, culture, and the subject, where culture and context always necessarily limit both the subject and the critic themselves. Context is always oriented towards a multiplicity of "elsewhere" (Medina, 2006, p. 50) similar to Andrus' matrices of context. "Discursive agency involves a process of constant recontextualization or echoing in which our discursive acts are constantly being oriented by histories of use and at the same time they are constantly reorienting these histories" (Medina, 2006, p. 167). In other words, this process of recontextualization is not inherently constraining or empowering, but by looking at how it occurs in context we can determine what it reveals about agency or the ability to speak

with consequence. I argue that processes of discursive agency such as recontextualization are not only oriented by histories of use, but also through local performances.

Finally, one productive problematic surrounding rhetorical and discursive agency is that of intentionality. Intention has served as a common and frequent prerequisite and signifier of agency (Giddens, 1993). I argue that intentionality is a less useful bright line for determining agency than that of responsibility. Rhetorical agency is emergent and enacted, it involves communication that "create[s] meanings through acting in the world and changing their structure in response to the perceived consequences" but inevitably has unintended implications (Cooper, 2011, p. 420). To address the conundrum of intention and agency, scholars outside of rhetoric have productively taken up agency as an actor (individual or collective) that reflexively monitors and rationalizes their actions but does not necessarily have the capability to discursively articulate their reasons or motivations for acting (Giddens, 1993, p. 92). Agency, then, is the *capability* to do otherwise (Giddens, 1993). Intent and motivation for acting refers to "potential for action," rather than the actual mode in which it is carried out (Giddens, 1993, p. 93). In fact, to confuse agency with intention is to ignore the consequences of intervention. For example, the implication of rhetorical discourses and performances may not be intentional, but they are invoked through the construction of agency; through the possibility to do otherwise. Giddens uses the example of a captain who intentionally pulls a lever on a ship, which had been mistaken as a different lever and the ship sinks as a result of the captain's agency (Giddens, 1993). The same is true of rhetorical agency, if rhetorical choices are made that could otherwise have been made differently, then this is an act of rhetorical agency regardless of intention to create a specific consequence.

The classic example that argues in favor of intentionality as the lynchpin to agency is that of suicide, which "cannot happen without intention" (Giddens, 1993, p. 95). However, the example of suicide (which is often contested) can still be used to illustrate how intention is itself a rhetorical construction. Some suicides are rhetorically constructed as an accident or other tragedy for religious or cultural reasons. In fact, articulations of intent and motivation may hide other unacknowledged or unconscious desires (Giddens, 1993). While discussions of intent would surely produce a range of interesting possibilities, evaluating agency as a process of reflexivity, rationalization, (which need not be articulated) and responsibility permits a theorization of rhetorical agency that explores how the rationalization of action is itself rhetorical and can occur in nondiscursive ways.

Alternately, responsible rhetorical agency theorizes persuasion as an invitation to listeners that constructs them as responsible agents coconstructing the interaction (Cooper, 2011). A view of rhetorical agency as contingent on responsibility encourages rhetors to recognize alternative interpretations and take ownership of the implications that result from their rhetorical choices, whether or not they were intentional or conscious. Cooper (2011) provides a very clear example of emergent rhetorical agency: "a response to a perturbation that is shaped by the rhetor's current goals and past experiences" (p. 426). In other words, the rhetorical situation and past experiences do not determine the rhetorical response, but they do shape it in important ways. The notion of responsible rhetorical agency escapes the tendency for theorizations of agency to become overly deterministic or unconstrained. Agency is emergent because it results from the ongoing and continual process of becoming who one is, part of which is not always a conscious

choice (Cooper, 2011). Thus, responsible rhetorical agency implies a choice, but not necessarily a single, definable, and intentional outcome.

In situ interrogations of rhetorical choice consider the role of silence, space, place, and the way agency is also performed and embodied rhetorically. This avoids an interpretation of marginalized people as hopelessly nonagentic and condemned to unconditional domination. Madison (2012) explains that one of the commitments of "critical ethnography is always a meeting of multiple sides in an encounter with and among the Other(s), one in which there is negotiation and dialogue toward substantial and viable meanings that make a difference in the Other's world" (p. 9). Taking on alternate and nondominant perspectives is a commitment that directly promotes a theorization of responsible rhetorical agency by recognizing the legitimacy of unintentional interpretations or outcomes. This commitment to engaging with the perspective of the other and representing alternative meanings imagines a world where rhetoricians make a concerted effort to listen and hear the perspective of the marginalized communities they study. Theorizing postcolonial subjectivities requires this interaction in order to avoid overly-deterministic views of agency that limit intervention and resign the researcher to reporting on the ways that society excludes the Other (Bignall & Patton, 2010). The use of both rhetorical agency and discursive agency furnishes an analysis of how extra-linguistic or nondiscursive elements of rhetoric may be used to empower and give voice, while discursive constraints may also limit these opportunities.

Empowerment

For the purpose of this study, empowerment is used in two ways: (1) empowerment is evaluated as a rhetoric in resettlement contexts, and (2) the expansion of

agency is taken as the telos of empowerment programs, of which certain subjectivities are privileged. Shome and Hedge (2002) identify issues of representation and agency as two analytical points of entry useful for postcolonial communication scholars. One of the ways that organizational communication research has taken up the issue of agency is through empowerment strategies. The research surrounding definitions and strategies of organizational empowerment is conflicted. Different types of organizational members, such as staff or volunteers, can have very different understandings of what constitutes empowerment, making gathering different perspectives an integral part of evaluating empowerment (Ashcraft & Kendrowicz, 2002). Generally, empowerment practices include participatory work practices, equitable decision making, and reward processes for organizational staff (D'Enbeau & Kunkel, 2013). Recent studies suggest Western models of economic empowerment may be effective in promoting the agency of women in Kenya (Shankar, Ornuya, & Alderman, 2015).

Still, empowerment is paradoxical. Studies have found that participatory structures can constrain empowerment and managerial interests can suppress voice and agency (Stohl & Cheney, 2001). For instance, in domestic violence shelters, some degree of security is needed to feel empowered, which entails certain restrictions on agency (Stohl & Cheney, 2001). Lee (2001) describes two different organizational approaches to empowerment, one being a case management approach, and the second which views empowerment as a process that is communicated and enacted through different levels of interaction and organizational procedures. An emergent approach to organizational rhetoric attends to the rhetorical implications of fragmented discourses and symbols embedded within organizational practices as they construct meaning and structures that

may constrain and enable the agency of refugees and workers within the resettlement organization.

Understanding organizational discourses and practices of empowerment as rhetorical or strategic representations is to explore the way that these performances function to legitimize viewpoints and institutional logics (Suddaby, 2005). One example of empowerment rhetoric that impacts organizational structures is what Darlington and Mulvaney (2002) call "reciprocal empowerment," or a discursive style that reflects a sense of personal authority. Reciprocal empowerment "combines the attributes of self-determination, independence, knowledge, choice and action…thereby creating an egalitarian environment that fosters equality, mutual respect, mutual attention, empathy, engagement and responsiveness" (Darlington & Mulvaney, 2002, p. 141). Identifying diverse research on empowerment is useful in approaching each situation with attention to the specific contextual demands.

Ashcraft and Kendrowicz (2002) remind us that empowerment is not as simple as some organizations may approach it, and authentic empowerment may require exploring alternate forms of organizing and emergent rationalities. An embodied approach to interrogating rhetoric involves a commitment to self-reflexivity, critical skepticism, and postcolonial historicization both as foundational methodological concepts as well as forms of intervention and possibilities for resistance to colonial rhetoric (Norander & Harter, 2011; Tretheway, 1999).

Discourses of Resettlement

Organizational and public policies engage in rhetorical constructions of organizational members, refugees or clients, and the public. While the study of policy

often refers to policy texts, policies also include a variety of "dynamic processes" such as the "practices and decisions that organize action across contexts" (Canary, 2010, p. 24) Policy rhetoric is important because it engages in social construction as a "world-shaping exercise," encompassing the "varying ways in which the 'realities' of the world are defined. This would include the images, stereotypes, and assignment of values to objects, people, and events" (Ingram, Schneider & deLeon & 2007, p. 95). Social construction operates in policy texts, talk, processes, and practices. Critical refugee studies have explored representations of refugees and the implementation of refugee and asylum policies, providing a basis for challenging problematic social constructions. In tracing the development of refugee studies, Black (2001) acknowledges that its development has "always been intimately connected with policy developments" (p. 58). In other words, policy processes control and shape the refugee experience in many different ways. Not only does governmental policy determine whether or not an individual may qualify for asylum, but the resettlement process is guided by organizational and public policies that are designed to provide resources within a set of professional, economic, and political boundaries.

There are two bases that form the foundation of the original articulation of social construction and policy design theory. First, constructions of the policy messages about target audiences influence the political orientations and participation of target groups. Second, positive and negative perceptions as well as general political power can influence the allocation of benefits and burdens based on whether they are assumed to be deserving or undeserving of such outcomes. Ingram, Schneider, and deLeon (2007) identify four distinct groups that emerge from policy processes: the advantaged, the

contender group, the dependents, and the deviants. These categories can be useful in identifying the relationship between groups and understanding why some may benefit while others do not. The advantaged enjoy both power and resources, as well as positive social constructions that portray them as entitled to support. Contenders are usually politically powerful, with "sub rosa" or buried benefits hidden in the details and implementations of policy, while dependents are often constructed as helpless and needy. Deviants "lack both political power and positive social constructions and tend to receive a disproportionate share of burdens and sanctions," such as those who participate in criminal activity or skirt immigration law in some fashion (Ingram, Schneider, & deLeon, 2007, p. 103). These categories can be useful in identifying the relationship between groups and understanding why some may benefit while others do not.

The social construction of policy is primarily interested in studying the design process as they relate to target audiences, which refocuses the inquiry on how policy itself can influence participants and determine who will benefit or be burdened (VanDeMark, 2006). However, social construction is a useful theory for interrogating structures and concepts beyond the target population, or the groups intended to be affected by policy. These elements include the overall goals, the problems addressed by policy, the general rationale for action, the standards used to judge who the policy should or should not be applied to, cause and effect logics inherent in the policy, and the discourse that legitimizes them, as well as the implementation structures (Ingram, Schneider, & deLeon & 2007). Thus, policy communication has far reaching effects on society that extend beyond the direct consequences of implementation.

Refugee resettlement policies have been critiqued for intruding on the rights of

displaced people. For example, policies of voluntary and forced repatriation, the policy of safe return, and involuntary return have all been favored by Northern states at different times in an attempt to find a durable solution to refugee crises (Chimni, 2004). Currently, involuntary repatriation has been the strategy most popular in an era of globalization, which denies refugees, such as Palestinians, the right to return home (Chimni, 2004). Top down governmental policies provide a framework of possibilities that resettlement organizations must contend with. Operating within the confines of these policy structures may have important implications and effects on nongovernmental organizational policies.

Further, the rhetoric and representations of refugees within the organization and society can construct refugees as helpless and needy, which both justifies an NGO's mission to provide access to the resources they need, and simultaneously rationalizes a paternalistic approach (Hardy & Phillips, 1997). The rhetoric of paternalism can perpetuate a system of dependence, in which refugees are never truly empowered (Bagenda & Hovil, 2003). This can both reify traditional structures of power, such as the state, as well as trap refugees in a discursive position that makes resistance unlikely and beyond rational self-interest. For example, the representation and appropriation of women refugees has been used to warrant the state's power of defending the nation from threatening refugees while simultaneously protecting them (McKinnon, 2011). Women refugees are simultaneously constructed as in need of the protection of the benevolent state, as well as being dangerous and burdensome. This is characteristic of media discourse regarding refugees that characterize them as a threat and a burden on host countries (KhosraviNik, 2010; Svirsky & Bignall, 2012).

Refugee studies include an expansive literature base, necessitating a more focused

approach that looks specifically at nongovernmental and nonprofit humanitarian organizations. In particular, refugee resettlement agencies, such as the Global Refugee Agency, operate within a web of policies (LeGreco, 2012) that requires some degree of cooperation with other organizations and the local community. A lack of coordination often characterizes interorganizational refugee policy due to a failure to converge around key values and due to the exclusion of relevant stakeholders (Hardy, 1994). It is uniquely important to study organizational rhetorics because they have an impact on broader, societal discourses, and networks of refugee policy, and *vice versa* (Hardy & Phillips, 1999). For instance, policies that focus on assimilation and integration can undermine cultural diversity and deepen societal divisions (Chu, 2007; Kelly, 2014; Vasta, 2007). Critical communication scholars may identify tensions that may emerge *in situ* between strategies of empowerment via assimilation and integration and policy strategies of empowerment.

Moreover, the study of forced migration has a decidedly practical bent, with a history of close interaction with policymakers such as the United Nations as well as various international development agencies. However, refugee studies have had less of an impact on policymaking than one might anticipate (Black, 2001). Rather than maintaining a myopic focus on governmental policies, communication scholars concerned with improving the experience of refugee resettlement have the potential to make important contributions on an organizational level by studying localized rhetorics and discourses.

Indeed, organizational rhetoric can function ideologically to produce, maintain, and reproduce objectives of those in power as a legitimate priority (Mumby & Clair,

2007). This is not to say that refugee resettlement is not a legitimate need, only that policy and public organizational discourse can reify the idea that there is one correct way to address these needs. Humanitarian organizations face a particular set of challenges when attempting to organize and develop policies to meet societal needs. Vestergaard (2013) suggests that humanitarian organizations are in crisis and suffering from the imposition of capitalist ideals into a philanthropic enterprise. More specifically, organizations are increasingly submitting to marketization and normative politics, rather than resisting or subverting global power relations to truly empower the marginalized communities they are concerned with. While this may or may not be true of the Global Refugee Agency, the client relationship constructed in policy talk and texts suggests this may be a rich site for extrapolating on the rhetoric which justifies expert aid organizations voluntarily handing over power and influence to their sources of funding (Vestergaard, 2013). In other words, although humanitarian organizations have the ground level experience to decide on the best policies and actions, rhetorics and institutional logics are shifting the locus of decision making away from the organization and into the hands of donors. Technology is one of the material and rhetorical resources that have enabled this shift in power, which carries with it important considerations, challenges, and opportunities.

Technological Challenges and Potentialities for Resistance

Though information communication technologies are not inherently good or bad, they may offer a mode of empowerment to individuals and organizations who use them in ways that resist and attempt to transform power structures. Technology functions as both an aspect of material rhetoric (technological rhetoric), in addition to being rhetorically

constructed itself (rhetorics of technology). First, technology can facilitate the development of community and broader discourses of participation that may create spaces of inclusivity for refugees and other marginalized people. This is because online, traditional boundaries can be challenged in order to facilitate cross cultural connections and collaborations (Castells, 2010). Moreover, resistance and project identities can use technology for democratic purposes - to propose potential ideas, deliberate and debate, as well as cooperate and communicate to create real social change. Individual activist and political organizations use the internet effectively to mobilize funding and generate awareness as well as increasing the availability of political information (Nisbet & Scheufele, 2004). In fact, there is evidence that online communication allows for more diverse and different activist strategies that are easily utilized by organizations because they tend to be low cost. As Bennet (2003) explains, "considerable evidence suggests that global activists have not only figured out how to communicate with each other under the mass media radar, but how to get their messages into mass media channels" (p. 4). Although refugees and staff may or may not be considered global activists, they use technology in subversive ways via mass media to promote or transform refugee resettlement. Examples from convergence culture illustrate this as particularly true today (Jenkins, 2006). In the networked society, activists can "hold brands hostage" online, forcing some reforms such as a change in production, the removal of chemicals from manufacturing process, or any other organizational activity subject to objection (Bennet, 2003). Because the internet can reach so many people with so little effort, it may be an important site of rhetorical empowerment and agency for those in the refugee community.

Next, information communication technologies can facilitate the formation of translocal communities that resist dominant governmental policies and societal exclusion (Cartier, Castells, & Qui, 2005). For instance, in China, rural users from low socioeconomic statuses known as the "information have less" have made use of low end technology and mobile devices that have helped them construct networks that Cartier et al. (2005) call "translocal networks" (p. 22), which refer to locally-based, regionally mobile groups of people who use low end technology to communicate in a network and help each other find work. Although leveraging low end technology that is generally lacking in updates and regulation is not necessarily challenging to dominant power structures, these translocal communities can serve as socioeconomic resources for refugee populations that would otherwise be attempting to survive without such resources. Thus, technology is a source of power for those on the outskirts of society, making the innovative use or transformation of technology to form new networks outside of dominant power structures an important form of resistance nonetheless.

However, it is important to acknowledge that technology is not inherently good or bad; it can be used to produce parallel power structures or challenge them. Similar to Foucault's view of power, power cannot be eliminated, it only shifts and takes on new forms. For example, Castell's (2010) discussion of the American militia, Aum Shinkrikyo, and Al-Qaeda illustrate clearly how technology can be used to promote horrific violence. Not all resistance necessarily works toward a normatively "better" future. Media and online communication are interactive and present unique potentials, but "the question that we ask about democratic media participation can no longer be limited to 'who gets to speak?' We must also ask 'who is heard, and to what end?"

(Burgess, 2006, p. 203). Indeed, technological and communicative networks have just as much productive potential for change as they have for disenfranchisement (Castells, 2010, p. 72).

Simply put, access is a prior question for refugees who often travel with little to nothing, meaning that the provision of information communication technology alone increases opportunities for both resistance and reification (Hargittai & Waleljko, 2008). Even then, those opportunities and potential actions or resistive practices are then subject to social recognition in order to be useful or intelligible to others (Hargittai & Schafer, 2006). Still, after considering the type of opportunities available and their impact on society, physical access is a prerequisite to participation in resistance. Barriers include different uptake of user created material along gender lines and lower socioeconomic status (Hargittai & Schafer, 2006) Thus, technological resistance is both materially bound and cultural situated, making it an ideal subject for *in situ* rhetorical inquiry.

The Global Refugee Agency operates within a transnational network of resettlement agencies, connected through similar goals and values (D'enbeau, 2011). Global networked society has changed the foundations of economies, politics, and social programs (Castells, 2010). Transnational organizing is an increasingly more important process in today's globalized world. What is transnationalism? Castells explains that, "society has taken on a fundamentally transnational character, with economies becoming interdependent, rendering the state powerless over its budget, production, taxes and commitments unless it can first assure the competitiveness of its economy in a global context" (Castells, 2010, p. 316). Simply put, transnational organizations are interdependent and based in multiple nations operating within a paradigm of

globalization. Clearly, transnational organizations become more important in a globalized world. Often times the word diaspora is used as a synonym for transnational, referring to the dispersal of populations through [neo]colonization and collective trauma which results in diasporic communities, such as refugees, settling outside their natal or imagined natal territories (Verhulst, 1999, p. 30).

Second, transnational organizing online can challenge Western norms and practices. Although transnationalism would be nearly impossible without the extent of online communication enabled by the internet, many cultures that develop online (organizational or not) are fundamentally multicentered and organized around nodes or "globalities" (Verhulst, 1999). Transnational organizing constructs hybrid collective identities, as discussed in the first section that challenge Western standards. Kvinna til Kvinna is an excellent example of how one nongovernmental organization partners with local women's organizations in postconflict societies to promote peace using alternative rationalities, strategies, and organizing practices (Norander & Harter, 2012). Although not all organizing practices and developing strategies challenge dominant power structures like [neo]colonialism, transnational NGO's tend to decenter top down, corporate approaches to development (Ganesh, 2003). Studying transnational organizations has the potential to bring into consideration new forms of organizing and marginalized epistemologies/ontologies traditionally excluded from Western approaches.

Furthermore, online communication has the potential to both form and bridge networks through global democracy, participation, interactivity, and consultation (D'Enbeau, 2011; Simone, 2010). The internet can facilitate the formation of "enclave spaces," which are shielded from mainstream publicity, where subaltern groups can

develop discourses before sharing them, which may protect them from cooptation or rejection (Simone, 2010, p. 124). However, while this may prove to be a positive potential, there is a chance that these groups can fragment and political momentum for change may dwindle.

The last potentiality of online communication in transnational organizing pertaining to this study relates to the state of theory in communication. I argue that transnational organizing in online spaces has the potential to help communication researchers continue to theorize about the role of place and space in the digital era. Carpenter (2012) discusses imaginary geographies, like America, which is spatialized through discourse that dictates who can be here and who cannot; who is in place within the constructed borders and who is out of place. The idea of a transnational "imaginary" or "cyberspace" may or may not be spatialized in the same way, constructing ideas about who is or who is not meant to be in a transnational "place" or cyberspace. Stohl (2005) comments on the effect of technology on time and space, explaining that online communication is characterized by a shrinking of space and a shortening of time. However, I have not found any communication-based research that has addressed the discourse of space and place in cyberspace and sites of transnational organizing.

One of the challenges facing organizations such as the Global Refugee Agency is the digital divide and how to fight social stratifications that occur online in ways similar to offline inequities. Today, the "digital divide" is less about a lack of access than it is about unequal access (Simone, 2010). According to vanDijk (2005), the divide is not representative of a gap between two fixed groups with absolute inequalities, it is more relative (like differences in software for example). However, the digital divide is not

unbridgeable or singular; it is important to recognize the physical/material, skills-based, motivational and usage gaps that prevent equal participation (vanDijk, 2005). One unique challenge to organizations attempting to address the digital divide is the legitimacy pitfall, or the tendency for organizations to narcissistically justify their existence over actually helping individuals (Ganesh, 2003). This may take the form of choosing short-term objectives, or taking action that is perceived as progress but may not actually accomplish anything, like handing out technology that certain populations have no experience with or knowledge about using. In fact, Stevenson (2009) argues that the digital divide is a rhetorical trope in neoliberal ideology that justifies U.S. deregulation and forecloses on social solutions. In this way, the strategic discourse of technology may conceal the way that the digital divide is used as a rhetorical trope and not as a problem that is usefully being addressed.

On the other hand, the divide is not a simple binary between the "haves" and the "haves not" (Cartier, et. al., 2005). In fact, those with less access or different access to technology may adapt or they may use technology that adapts to their needs both financially and capacity wise (Cartier, et. al., 2005; Simone, 2010). The example of Chinese translocal communities illustrates this adaptation strategy well (Cartier, et. al., 2005, p. 29). Even upgrading can hurt the material interests of "have-less" consumers while also "reproducing unequal power relations by forcing them to abandon one digital technology and adopt another" (Cartier, et. al., 2005, p. 29). In this way, constant technological innovation and progress is not unquestionably the best solution to technological inequality. The participatory culture of the digital age bucks old ideas about passive media consumers and spectators while acknowledging that not all participants are

equal or can participate in equal ways (Jenkins, 2009). One way of evaluating inequitable participation processes is via *in situ* approaches to rhetorics of technology and technological rhetoric.

In Situ Rhetoric

A field-based approach to rhetoric combines ethnographic methods such as interviewing, participant observation, and intervention with critical rhetorical analysis in order to interrogate the implications of lived experiences, embodied performances, and organizational practices. Using critical rhetoric and ethnographic practices in concert creates dynamic artifacts that trouble both participant and text driven perspectives on rhetoric" (Middleton, Endres & Senda-Cook, 2011, p. 390). Employing a rhetorical field methods approach provides a method for exploring a broader range of nondiscursive practices and performances as rhetorical "texts," representing traditionally marginalized or neglected voices and situated experiences and theorizing empowerment and agency.

Silence, space, and time are three components of rhetoric that exemplify non-traditional dimensions of rhetoric enabled through *in situ* field methods. Regarding silence or absence, Conquergood (2002) explains that, "dominant epistemologies that link knowing with seeing are not attuned to meanings that are masked, camouflaged, indirect, embedded or hidden in context" (p. 142). Without recognizing nondominant articulations and performances of agency and empowerment, an analysis of refugee resettlement rhetoric may reproduce the notion that refugees are unconditionally subjugated and hopelessly nonagentic participants in the process. A criticism of only traditional organizational texts may fail to acknowledge other important fragments of rhetoric circulating within the site of study.

Moreover, space and place are elements involved in assessing rhetorical agency, which includes the ability to move one's body in a symbolically significant way. Raka Shome (2003) states that "who moves, where, and under what conditions, and who does not move and stays in place, under what conditions, have to do with how individuals are differently situated in relation to structures that enable movement or the lack of movement" (p. 53). Gender expectations, the lack of other options for childcare, and in some cases, individual choice can lead women to care for their families while men are expected to find work and provide an income. Being in the field and paying attention to performances and embodied ways of conveying meaning, we can observe how and what constricts these performances.

Critical rhetoric recognizes the cultural importance of discourse and its location in music, art, criticism, dance, architecture, and other nontextual dimensions of the local community which entails "engaging in talk about everyday speech, conversations in homes, restaurants and 'on the corner'" (Ono & Sloop, 1995, p. 20). Hess (2011) distinguishes critical rhetorical ethnography from "longstanding traditions of textual analysis and after the fact criticism" explaining that "while still useful, are not the primary focus of the method. Rather, rhetorical ethnographers engage in direct participation inside invention and advocacy" (p. 129). The Global Refugee Agency was a particularly well-suited site because the selection adheres to the critical commitments and emancipatory potential by "illuminating the experiences" of marginalized communities (Middleton, Endres & Senda-Cook, 2011, p. 390). This project will contribute a pragmatic understanding of problematic and empowering discourses and rhetorical practices within one of the largest refugee resettlement organizations in the world, as well

as develop a theorization of the nondiscursive aspects of rhetorical agency and empowerment.

The following questions guided the field work and provided a central focus for gathering and analyzing textual fragments and extra-discursive rhetorical practices, performances, and materiality. Research questions 1a-c are addressed in Chapter 4 while questions 2 a-c are discussed in Chapter 5:

- *Research Question 1a:* How do resettlement organizational practices and policies promote the *rhetorical agency* of refugees to make strategic symbolic choices?
- *Research Question 1b:* How does the Global Refugee Agency construct empowerment and agency?
- *Research Question 1c:* What role does technology play in the empowerment of refugees?
- *Research Question 2a:* How do *in situ* organizational rhetorics of resettlement assist and/or resist colonial discourses?
- *Research Question 2b:* How do rhetorical practices of resettlement participate in or challenge patriarchal and gendered neo-colonialist discourses?
- *Research Question 2c:* How do Western *organizational rhetoric and practices*, in their representations of the world and of themselves, participate in or resist the legitimization of contemporary global power structures?

Conclusions

In sum, this study takes up the project of decolonization, by applying postcolonial theory to the rhetorical criticism of organizational discourses and practices, as well as by calling attention to the value and importance of non-Western processes of knowledge

production and organizing within marginalized and subaltern refugee communities. This project takes up postcolonial rhetoric to: (1) evaluate the historical, relational, and intersectional implications of representations within an international humanitarian organization, (2) explore possibilities for resistance and decolonization, (3) account for gendered and colonial forms of rhetorical oppression, and (4) theorize alternative forms of empowerment and agency as rhetorical practices.

By heeding Ganesh, Zoller, and Cheney's (2005) call, this project begins to theorize the international process of social change and organizing by seeking out rhetorics "from below" (p. 169). Postcolonialism provides a useful theoretical approach to expanding our "thoughts about power and domination in order to deal with issues of social inequality, resistance, and processes of social change wrought by global markets" (Ganesh, Zoller, & Cheney, 2005, p. 170). In this way, calling attention to different rhetorical practices of empowerment should produce valuable insight into organizational best practices for promoting agency and addressing marginalization within institutional spaces.

Chapter 3 elaborates on rhetorical field methods (RFM) as a methodological approach, the Global Refugee Agency, and the individuals who participated in the study. Researcher positionality provides an opportunity for reflection on the ways that my identity and personal assumptions impacted my interactions at the office, including related challenges, such as the inability to obtain thick description from refugees. Finally, I describe the treatment of the large data set, including the coding, thematic, and organizational processes used in the analysis.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

In this study, I use rhetorical field methods (RFM) to analyze organizational practices, places, performances and discourses as symbolically significant. RFM addresses the question that begets all field work; why study texts of practices exclusively when you can also study the rhetorical force of the practice itself (Anderson, 2014)? RFM responds by examining the actual lived and embodied elements of rhetoric. One of the advantages of RFM is that the *in situ* data collection considers a wider range of "texts" within its analysis. In the following section, I give a brief overview of rhetorical field methods as a means of collecting practices, performances, and extra-discursive, non-linguistic rhetorical constructions of resettlement and empowerment while employing a critical praxis of intervention. The next section presents justification for the method followed by a detailed description of the site of study, researcher positionality, data collection, participants, and data analysis procedures.

Rhetorical Field Methods

First, RFM expands the text by drawing on performance and ethnographic methods. Performance frameworks view embodied experiences as contingent and rhetorically significant (Middleton, Endres, & Senda-Cook, 2011). Thus, ethnographic methods provide a way of collecting performances and sensuous experiences as a way of

knowing (Conquergood, 1991, p. 180). Critical ethnographic methods such as observation, interviewing, and participation allow for a rhetorical consideration of non-discursive events, spaces, practices, and interactions (Hess, 2011). "Using both CR (critical rhetoric) and ethnographic practice in concert creates dynamic artifacts that trouble both participant and text driven perspectives on rhetoric" (Middleton, et. al., 2011, p. 390). While ethnography focuses on participants and traditionally rhetoric has focused on the text, a combination of both gives the critic a more informed perspective by which to analyze the experiences and discourses at hand. Experiences included in the analysis occurred within the office, at meetings and job club, within the homes of refugees, and other community spaces, such as the Kitchen Incubator. Without challenging the visual and verbal bias of Western regimes of knowledge, ethnographers will remain blind to meanings that are expressed via "intonation, silence, body tension, arched eyebrows, blank stares, and other protected arts of disguise and secrecy" (Conquergood, 2002, p. 146). The performances and spacial organization of events like World Refugee Day, in addition to the mundane choices made in meetings and training sessions can have significant communicative and rhetorical effect. Thus, the bodily practice of ethnography subverts and destabilizes hegemonic binaries between mind and body, reason and emotion, and objective and subjective knowledge (Conquergood, 1991).

Adopting rhetorical field methods offers three theoretically generative concepts that will guide the analysis: 1) space and place, 2) rhetorical practices of cultural colonization and resistance and 3) the development of nondiscursive aspects of rhetorical agency that provide pragmatic recommendations for empowerment. Tracy (2013) defines sensitizing concepts as theories or interpretive devices that serve as key jumping off

points or lenses for the study. Space and place, critical rhetorical implications, and rhetorical agency are all sensitizing concepts that are accessible through *in situ* fieldwork.

RFM also draws on critical ethnographic literature, which allows the rhetorician to analyze news "texts" by using ethnographic data collection. Herbig and Hess (2011) suggest "convergent critical rhetoric" as a means of employing ethnographic methods and critical rhetoric to understand media production processes and how texts are created, as well as how they function in public discourses (p. 270). RFM incorporates innovations in critical-rhetorical ethnography, both which focus on fieldwork, recording interactions, and nondiscursive events, in addition to participating in rhetorical invention and advocacy (Hess, 2011). Thinking of ethnography as "critical theory in action" emphasizes the importance of positionality and privilege, dialogue, and otherness, and the interconnectedness of theory and method (Madison, 2012). RFM and critical rhetorical ethnography are complementary methodological developments that suggest the importance of expanding notions of the text.

One theme in the rhetoric of resettlement is the construction of space and place, which required the use of ethnographic and field methods. The study of location and space as elements of rhetoric have resulted in the analysis of place in protest (Endres & Senda-Cook, 2011), authenticity, and claims to nature in Starbucks (Dickinson, 2002), and certain spaces, like that of the tattoo parlor, as being key to agency (Modesti, 2008). While space has traditionally been paid marginal consideration as a backdrop for rhetoric, or as the context of the discourse being studied, it should be recognized as a critical part of communication itself (Shome, 2003). In her study of the U.S.-Mexico border, Shome (2003) writes, "space is a component of power that penetrates all other social

frameworks, and, although not every social relation can be reduced to space, space is nonetheless a force that helps constitute other social relations" (p. 41). Rhetorical field methods acknowledge space as a critical component of power and social relations by allowing material aspects of the location to factor into the analysis, such as the meaning and use of the park an event is held at, cooccuring events and signs (Endres & Senda-Cook, 2011).

Furthermore, RFM bring into focus the cultural and performative practices and events that participate and resist hegemonic constructions of nonnational bodies. By drawing on performance studies, rhetorical field methods finds a wealth of theoretical justification for focusing on the performative dimensions of culture and rhetoric. Conquergood (2002) critiques the "visual/verbal bias of Western regimes of knowledge" that "blinds researchers to meanings that are expressed forcefully through intonation, silence, body tension, arched eyebrows, blank stares, and other protected arts of disguise and secrecy" (p. 146). Traditional rhetoric and even critical rhetoric, omits these important aspects from analysis even when examining interview transcripts, or other previously embodied forms of discourse. Even transcription alone cannot avoid leaving out extra-linguistic features of communication that may be politically relevant. Rhetorical field methods uses this as a basis of criticism, positioning the researcher as a participant, engaging and coconstructing the rhetoric they critique.

It is this emphasis on embodied practices and critique that underlies the basis of performance and critical ethnography which RFM finds most productive. The bodily practice of ethnography subverts and destabilizes hegemonic binaries between mind and body, reason and emotion, objective and subjective knowledge, and masculinity and

femininity (Conquergood, 1991). Kristeva differentiates the semiotic from the symbolic, both which may be used or made use of rhetorically, explaining that the feminine realm of semiotic communication which emphasizes the ability of nonverbal signifiers to change meaning and create opportunities for invention, is neglected in favor of patriarchal symbolism (Montgomery, 2000). At the same time, the focus on rhetoric and discourse as constructive mediators of experience lift ethnography from the potential pitfall of assuming the evidence of experience is the origin of knowledge (Scott, 1991). Rather, rhetorical field methods takes a critical rhetorical approach to engaging in ethnographic and performative methods, which subjects the discursive character of experience to analysis itself (Scott, 1991). In this way, both embodied experience and rhetorical communication destabilize the primacy of the other.

Research Site

The site of study is a humanitarian organization focused on refugee resettlement working in the Intermountain West region of the United States. I refer to the organization with a pseudonym, the Global Refugee Agency (GRA), to protect the anonymity of the participants and prevent any possible backlash from the local community that may occur in response to statements of the participants. The organizational pseudonym was assigned at the request of the regional director during a meeting to obtain approval to conduct research. The GRA is an international humanitarian aid organization responding to crises around the world, but one of the main operations is refugee resettlement in the United States. Over 20 offices across the United States focus on the domestic resettlement of refugees into Western life, with refugees relying on the GRA to provide critical resources such as housing, English education, job training, and cultural orientation. Though the

GRA operates in 40 different countries providing emergency relief, this study is concerned with the regional office and the local GRA activities in the community focused on helping resettle refugees. The local community is home to over 10,000 refugees that have relied on services provided by the GRA. The Executive Director granted permission to observe the office and interview staff and refugees in November 2014.

The GRA program is a unique organizational case study for at least two reasons: (1) it has the funding capability to commit resources for a one-year period of time, which is significantly longer than the six-month timeframe used in other resettlement programs, and (2) it is serving as the pilot host community for new empowerment programs, such as the Community Garden and the Kitchen Incubator. Programs like community farming gives refugees the responsibility of caring for a plot of land in the garden and the option to sell their produce at farmer's markets. The Kitchen Incubator is a one-of-a-kind entrepreneurial training initiative for refugees who have the skills to start a restaurant, food cart, or catering business. The microenterprise program is also modelled after similar small loan granting and entrepreneurial support initiatives aimed at empowerment, such as the Grameen Bank (Papa, Auwal, & Singhal, 1997).

As the primary researcher, I was immersed in this organizational site in an official capacity serving as a volunteer participant for a total of 1 year and 3 months, including the time in preparation for and during data collection. During this time I participated in a variety of activities: 1) performing volunteer responsibilities at the front desk, 2) consistently meeting with an Iraqi refugee family, and 3) helping at the Kitchen Incubator and providing childcare during a domestic violence support group for Sudanese refugees, and 4) sitting in during two job club sessions and a cultural orientation meeting. These

experiences were a basis for field notes and observation of interactions between clients and GRA staff, volunteers and interns.

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Researcher Positionality

As a rhetorician, and more specifically within RFM, self-reflexivity is an integral part of maintaining the integrity of the interpretations and implications that result from analysis (Markham, 2005). Self-reflexivity is the ongoing process of reflection and interrogation of positionality and the relations and interactions between the self and other (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Analyses of field work are subject to the researcher's perceptions, reflections, and convictions, making an interrogation of the researcher a necessary part of any ethnographic or field-based research. Immersing oneself in the site of study is the first step toward productively considering how the researcher's roles and past experiences impact interpretations and interactions in the scene (Tracy, 2013).

Additionally, the critical praxis of RFM takes ethnography as critical theory in action (Madison, 2012). By promoting a type of interventionist ethics, the rhetorician is positioned as a participant, not a participant observer, but as an authentic member who can shape discourse and symbolic expressions within the field. Using critical rhetoric and ethnography combined is an approach that takes seriously the claim that rhetoricians must not just say, but do. In my pursuit of ethical ethnographic participation, I was guided by Gonzalez' (2000) explication of an ontology of ethnography. This approach does not discard traditional ethnographic practices, rather it incorporates them into a nonlinear, circular order that challenges Western ethnographic ideals including opportunism, independence of the researcher, entitlement, and the primacy of rationality. In order to assist in this process, I maintained a journal that provided me a personal space of

reflection on my interactions with these concepts as I journeyed through the four seasons of ethnography (Gonzalez, 2000). The four seasons privileges natural cycles, an awareness of interdependence, preparedness and harmony of discipline (Gonzalez, 2000).

The instrument of ethnographic research is a human instrument, one which demands the development of introspection as a necessary skill required to be ethically engaged in the field (Gonzalez, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Throughout the ethnography, I reflected in my personal journal, which helped to develop and maintain my sense of self-awareness and critical interrogation of my assumptions, interactions and intentions as I navigated the processes of preparation and theoretical preemptive exploration (Spring), immersion and data collection (Summer), harvesting and analysis (Autumn), and the incubation and writing period (Winter). The following section discusses my political, theoretical, and personal commitments as they intersected during the process of tilling the theoretical soils in Spring, laboring in the fields of data collection throughout Summer, harvesting the analysis in Autumn, and hibernating during the writing process of Winter. The following sections summarize some of my notes during each of these stages.

My commitments as a critical ethnographer developed over the course of my graduate studies and served as a foundation for this project. The preparation for my entry into the field oriented me to specific concepts in rhetoric, critical discourse studies, and postcolonialism that shaped what type of questions I wanted to ask, who I wanted to speak to, and what interactions and experiences were deemed significant. These ideas oriented me to the field in a way that both necessarily and productively enabled and restricted the data. Gonzalez (2000) cautions researchers that during the spring season of

ethnography that these pragmatic limitations may make the researcher reluctant or unable to see future challenges that prevent access to all of the information expected to be collected or understood. Ideally, refugee interviews would be included and translated because their perspectives are invaluable in the assessment of resettlement discourses. I revised the interview protocol to make it more accessible, modifying the language to avoid jargon whenever possible. For instance, I eliminated questions about "feeling a sense of personal agency" and replaced them with questions that asked, "Can you recall a time when you felt in control?"

In the relative time commitments of volunteers, I have been referred to as a "long time" volunteer by the volunteer coordinator, having spent one year and three months volunteering in varying capacities and wherever needed, at the front desk, as a family mentor, in donation drives, and childcare at the Kitchen Incubator. Before establishing relationships with refugee clients in the Salt Lake City community, my understanding of their experiences was very limited outside of media discussions about fleeing violence and political persecution. I had little understanding of the resettlement process. Knowing more about the conflicts that displace populations, I had assumed that being resettled in the United States would solve the main issues and obstacles facing refugees. After developing close friendships with the family I was assigned to mentor, I learned the extent to which refugees struggle once in the United States. The myriad challenges include difficulties navigating Western bureaucratic practices, limited English training, severe physical disabilities, and unaddressed mental health issues.

My positionality as a white, cultural insider in my late 20s with access to significant rhetorical and material resources inform my interactions and interpretations.

As a doctoral student studying communication, this is one aspect of my identity that impacts my perception and others perception of me in more and less helpful ways. For instance, my research agenda and the attention of my advisor allowed me to establish a positive relationship with the Director of the GRA, who also serves as the acting Regional Director for four different offices in the western United States. However, it has also at times elicited interest from staff workers and other volunteers, while perhaps conveying expertise. Expert status in the field can be both helpful and detrimental to the data collection process. While in some instances, it may have generated more interest and thus participants, it also may have invoked communicative norms of authority that hindered open dialogue. Tracy (2013) reminds participant ethnographers to understand that doing field work can leave organizational members feeling paranoid, suspicious, or anxious about a researcher taking note of their behaviors, conversations, language, and interactions. I encountered some of these issues during data collection. For instance, comments were made during interviews such as "I shouldn't be telling you this." During "job club" sessions aimed at training refugees to enter the workforce, my field notes included the comment, "the attendees [refugee clients] glanced at me often, as if wondering why there was a silent observer typing on a computer in the middle of job club." I remain aware that my presence as a researcher had an effect on the interactions that I observed in the field. To echo Geertz (1973), no researcher is capable of being a fly on the wall, field work involves the recognition of how certain observations may be affected by the presence of the researcher.

Furthermore, researchers are in a position of power, necessitating a constant dialogue with other identities and voices (Madison, 2012). Keeping this in mind,

revealing my identity and research agenda were carefully balanced with an attitude of openness and respect that encouraged the participant to see themselves as the expert of their own experiences. Moreover, rhetorical field methods challenges my positionality as a researcher in very productive ways. Specifically, the commitments to critical praxis, engagement with (and from) other perspectives (Madison, 2012), and the *in situ* approach challenges the disciplining tendencies of Western logocentric practices (Conquergood, 2002).

Data Collection

The following types of texts were collected for analysis: 1) observational field notes and analytical memos, 2) interview transcripts with participants and 3) policies and organizational documents. "Texts" may refer to any symbolic or discursive form (Anderson, 2014), in this case including reflections on interactions, experiences, practices, and extra-linguistic representations. The three types of data were collected concurrently and interviews were conducted until data saturation was reached (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Early in the interview process, themes began emerging that were coded soon after they were transcribed.

Observational field notes were recorded in the following locations: the GRA office, the GRA conference room during two job club meetings, and a cultural orientation for new refugees, in addition to the Kitchen Incubator, which is an off-site location, not connected to the main office. The researcher took the role of a "focused participant," or an observer as participant, meaning that intervention in the field is part of collecting data and understanding the site of study (Tracy, 2013). Participant observation entails the constant referral to research questions to make connections between the emergent

rhetorical practices and the research questions. Field notes gathered "thick description" of discursive and nondiscursive and extra-linguistic aspects of rhetoric by first gathering as much information as possible and then refining into field notes, and finally writing analytical memos to develop an understanding organizational tensions and empowerment strategies (Geertz, 1973; Tracy, 2013). Thick description is especially important as it provides important material and contextual information that influences meaning and is used to support the interpretations drawn in the analysis (Tracy, 2013).

Interviews were transcribed by a professional transcriptionist, and all final transcriptions were reviewed and compared with the original recordings to guarantee the integrity of the data. Interviews were conducted using a semistructured interview guide (see Appendix A). Questions attempted to reveal motivations, experiences with empowerment, and reflections on the challenges of resettlement, as well as description of events and conversations that illustrated participant responses. Interviews included a blend of topical and narrative questions that provided a space for reflections, clarifications, and spontaneous elaborations (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Follow-up questions allowed participants to discuss things with which they had special experience or expertise. For instance, the donations coordinator tended to relate his answers to the challenges and rewards of organizing donation drives. Participants were interviewed in the GRA private conference room, their personal office, or at the neighboring coffee shop.

The interviews were informal, conversational, and open-ended in nature, inviting participants to ask follow-up questions and direct the interview toward issues that personally interested or resonated with them. Responsive interviewing practices were

used that emphasize respectful and encouraging behavior during the interview, while acknowledging personal bias and its effects (Tracy, 2013). For instance, during Matt and Christa's interviews, both individuals explicitly acknowledged that their answers would be used in a published paper, after which I reassured them of their confidentiality and protection of their privacy. The interview guide began with questions that frame and establish social locations (i.e. – "tell me about yourself;" "how and why did you get involved with the GRA?") and moved into questions that were intended to prompt narratives and descriptions of their daily practices, relationships at the GRA, and discourses of resettlement. Follow-up communication was offered to each participant, providing them with a transcript of the interview and the opportunity to review and revise their answers. Maintaining a network of participants helped elucidate unclear interactions, meanings, and motivations, and was used as a type of member checking that maintained the integrity of the interpretations during the analysis and provided additional important insights (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

Finally, 44 policy and organizational documents were included in the analysis. This includes policies printed in the organizational handbook and online, as well as cultural backgrounders provided to caseworkers, cultural orientation presentation material, training documents, as well as strategic planning materials and proposals. Public and media materials that were included were limited to those specific media circulated by the local GRA office, such as fliers that related to local initiatives, email communication, and informational publications on the local GRA website. This maintained site-specific coherence of the data set and prevented the conflation of discourse generated by the international headquarters of the GRA and the discourses of the focal GRA study site.

Participants

Two types of participants were recruited: refugee clients of the GRA and staff workers, case workers, volunteers, and other organizational members or affiliates of the GRA in one local host community. Interview data were collected from willing participants who were recruited through the use of snowball sampling (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Snowball sampling uses "referrals made among people who share or know of others who possess some characteristics that are of research interest" (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 124). No personal or identifying information was recorded. The Institutional Review Board granted the request for a waiver of documentation of informed consent in the interest of protecting all identifying information of participants. Pseudonyms were assigned to all consenting participants and no names were used in the field notes, interview transcripts, or final analysis. The University of Utah Institutional Review Board approved the study.

Most participants were organizational staff members, the majority of whom were caseworkers. The role of caseworkers is to guide refugees and their families through the resettlement process, and most are former refugees who have settled into community life and can speak languages from regions with large refugee populations. Other organizational members included in the interviews were administrative staff, such as the volunteer coordinator, Kitchen Incubator coordinator, donations coordinator, Community Garden staff, and micro-enterprise coordinator, in addition to the mental health specialist and her intern. In total, 29 requests for GRA staff member participation were made, and 18 interviews were conducted with organizational staff members. Conducting interviews with organizational members at several different levels of involvement produced data

representing a diverse range of perspectives from within the GRA.

Finally, I faced challenges that limited my ability to interview refugees. In total, 21 refugees were contacted for interview requests, each one in face-to-face conversation at either World Refugee Day or at the GRA office. Of those 21, 15 refugees declined an interview when approached, six refugees consented to an interview, three refugee participants who granted interviews declined to be voice recorded. All three of the refugees who granted recorded interviews had previous personal interactions with me at the GRA. In the interest of maintaining the integrity of the data and its interpretation, the decision was made to focus the analysis on members of the organization and organizational texts, rather than refugee perspectives collected via interviews. The reasons for this decision included 1) a significant language barrier, 2) a reticence to participate in "interviews," and 3) the lack of thick description during interviews successfully conducted with refugee clients. The interviews that were collected did not yield thick description from participants, even with prompts for elaboration, or they generated responses that were misinterpretations of the original questions, even after attempts at rephrasing, repeating, and using simple vocabulary. For instance, when asking Aiman, "What is the hardest thing about moving here?" He responded, "I no understand," to which I clarified, "anything difficult, challenging, hard, upsetting?" He said, "Oh Malaysia and here? Very difficult, very, very difficult." After repeated attempts and continued confusion, I abandoned the question. The combination of language barriers and cultural differences elicited short responses and made gathering thick description and perspectives from refugees difficult, even for those with whom I had personal experience and relationships. Through discussions with my supervisory committee I decided against

using translation services for interviews for several reasons. Translation services can be unreliable, which may jeopardize an authentic analysis, in addition to being difficult to obtain during each interaction and interview. Case workers reported that they need translation services but have difficulty obtaining those services, meaning that obtaining a translator for interviews would have directly competed with the GRA's need for reliable translation for work purposes. Further, due to the tendency of refugee populations to speak regional or local dialects upon arrival, it is not always possible for a translator to communicate successfully with individuals who have very recently arrived in the United States, and translations may contain inaccuracies. Finally, participative action approaches that specifically focus on refugee experiences encourage the researcher to listen and ground their interpretations in the participant's experiences (Collie, Liu, Podsiadlowski, & Kindon, 2009). The alternative way of understanding resettlement experiences and organizational challenges was to listen to those former refugees who are now caseworkers helping to resettle new families. In order to better respond to the needs of participants, I focused on the interview responses from GRA staff members and organizational processes, experiences and documents.

Data Analysis

Although data analysis and data collection are represented separately, the critical rhetorical approach to analyzing *in situ* discourses and rhetorical formations followed an iterative or cyclical process that moved between data collection, consultation with the literature, and analysis (Gonzalez, 2000). Rhetorical themes emerged as patterns and connected discourses and practices that were repeated by participants or emphasized via participant description recurrently. Data saturation occurred at the point that interpretive

and rhetorical themes within the discursive strategies and symbolically significant practices become repetitive and no new information or insight was becoming evident in field notes, memos, transcripts, and organizational texts (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). After interviews were transcribed, all of the data including field notes and photos, interviews, and organizational texts were imported into NVIVO 11 qualitative data analysis software program in order to store and sort the data appropriately.

Qualitative coding guided the first layer of analysis, drawing heavily from Charmaz' (2006) grounded theory coding and Glaser and Strauss's (1967) constant comparative method. I first began with a close read of the entire data set and a line-by-line reading of the field notes, memos, transcripts and texts before generating a list of first level, descriptive codes (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). As I began noticing patterns and conflicting interpretations that were emerging in the data, I began developing analytic codes that required the recoding of the initial descriptive level coded data. Field notes totaling 92 separate field note documents were included as they provide records of non-textual events and performances, while also furnishing important contextual information relevant for understanding participants' experiences.

Codes are words or short phrases that symbolically assign summative attributions (Saldana, 2012). Codes can summarize, distill or condense but they do not reduce the data down, they make it more efficiently organized, identifiable and useful in the final analysis. Coding is a way of looking for patterns, while critical rhetoric provides a way of making sense and analyzing the implications of those patterns. Although codes are useful in identifying rhetorical strategies, trends, and themes, the unit of the analysis is the force of the text, which is not simply a sum of its parts (Anderson, 2014). After several

iterations of coding, there were 17 thematic categories that resulted from the data. These codes include capacity building, caseworker-refugee relationships, challenges, cultural differences, education, employment, empowerment, gender, GRA systems, inequality, magnitude of the problem, personal background, place, public opinion, resettlement, refugee identity, and research. Twelve of these codes include subcategories that break the data into more specific analytical themes. For instance, coded data under "empowerment" included: communicating equality, cultural connections, and economic empowerment. The final step in the analysis included a sorting of the relevant nodes into themes that relate to the research questions. Appendix B includes a table of constitutive codes and thematic categories. This resulted in an interpretive set of material and discursive tensions that influenced the structures and activities within the organization. These themes are developed in detail in Chapter 4, discussing tensions and contradictions between empowerment as a passive or active engagement and paradoxical practices of letting others help themselves. Chapter 5 explores the critical rhetorical implications of discursive formations and practices of entrepreneurial and consumer-based empowerment which, "links the cultural specificities of particular non-Western rhetorics with larger geopolitical forces and networks" (Wang, 2013 p. 226). In this way, the research questions performed an essential guiding function during the data analysis, which provided for a more focused interrogation of the data.

Conclusion

The analysis that resulted was not a linear, predictable application of concepts to ethnographic data, instead it reflects a commitment to the natural cycles of ethnography (Gonzalez, 2000). This approach "requires that predetermined designs and outcomes be

abandoned as dictators of activity" (Gonzalez, 2000, p. 632), which allowed for the development of Chapter 4. Though postcolonial and decoloniality literature informed and contextualized a broader critique of entrepreneurial rhetoric in empowerment programs as they cooperate with imperial global capitalist power structures, the data required looking beyond the original theoretical basis. Organizational and dialectical tension theories spoke to the emergent tensions that characterized participant perspectives and practices, allowing the analysis to develop without being unnecessarily limited by the original theoretical expectations.

In sum, rhetorical field methods provided a useful and innovative approach to studying rhetorics of resettlement and recolonization by using *in situ* data collection techniques characteristic of ethnography, combined with qualitative coding and rhetorical criticism as the means of data analysis. Postcolonialism, social construction, and critical theory provide a complementary and productive theoretical basis for inquiry into the organizational policies, public communication, practices and processes occurring within the Global Refugee Agency. This project will extend theoretical insight into rhetorical agency and contemporary humanitarian rhetoric, in addition to providing pragmatic suggestions for prioritizing the empowerment of marginalized communities and challenging problematic social constructions.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS, PART I: DISCURSIVE AND MATERIAL TENSIONS IN EMPOWERMENT PRACTICES

The Global Refugee Agency is a unique humanitarian nonprofit in that it works to resettle refugees, rather than providing relief to individuals struggling as they live within local communities. The organization is explicitly focused on social justice issues, equality, and implementing empowerment programs focused on economic productivity, sustainability, and independence. The handbook for staff members states that, "the American way of self-determination and freedom of choice can be both an exciting and frightening change for refugees." Indeed, empowerment is a complex, dynamic web of discourses that necessitates the negotiation of tensions which arise from the implementation of empowerment programs. The process of empowerment post-resettlement involves the negotiation of key tensions including passive/active involvement, structure-agency and assimilation-difference, which help to make sense of the competing realities and challenges facing humanitarian staff.

One of the often quoted phrases used by members of the GRA is "from harm to home," referencing the objective of resettlement work, which is to move refugees from dangerous places and help them start a safe life elsewhere. Imperialism relies on binaries between safety/danger, constructing imaginary geographies of dangerous, mysterious territories in a way that attempts to rationalize rescue and intervention. These binaries

are reified through the harm versus home construct which may overlook the ways that "home" can be a very precarious place. Chapter 5 addresses the rhetorical implications of humanitarian discourse and practices, while this chapter includes an exploration of tensions related to empowerment in order to challenge binaries and normative privilege by first working towards a better understanding of how communication constructs the social realities around refugee resettlement.

The research questions addressed in this chapter are:

- *Research Question 1a:* How do resettlement organizational practices and policies promote the *rhetorical agency* of refugees to make strategic symbolic choices?
- *Research Question 1b:* How does the Global Refugee Agency construct empowerment and agency?
- *Research Question 1c:* What role does technology play in the empowerment of refugees?

Emergent tensions, contradictions, and paradoxes account for the organization and practices of empowerment, agency, and technology. Participant responses form a basis for interrogating the ways that empowerment includes a multiplicity of different conditions and negotiated meanings. "Communication is a site where organizational members struggle for the primacy of various meanings of truth and identity, as well as their material manifestations" (Trethewey & Ashcraft, 2004, p. 84). Empowerment is determined through its communicative negotiation. There is a constant struggle over the meaning of "empowerment," so viewing it as crystalline may help to recognize and respond to competing demands without prioritizing one over another. Further, a crystalline view of empowerment centers the processual and refractory effects of

engaging in empowerment practices and the problematics of attempting to produce a fixed outcome or meaning of empowerment. The following analysis provides a vocabulary for discussing the different reflections of empowerment.

This chapter introduces the term, *crystalline empowerment* as a metaphor that provides for the recognition of the vast and seemingly contradicting tensions that arise from the implementation and organizational, structuring processes of empowerment as they unfold. The term has its roots in Tracy and Trethewey's (2005) concept of the *crystallized identity* that escapes binaries between the real and fake self by encompassing both. Likewise, this view of empowerment offers an alternative to singular interpretations of the term that may unknowingly fail to address the needs of certain populations in need or overlook nondominant understandings of empowerment. Moreover, crystalline empowerment suggests growth and centers the organic and processual nature of empowerment. The crystalline metaphor is rhizomatic in that it describes a texture implicating a multiplicity of possible dimensions, angles, and lines, rather than an arborescent closed system of predictable elements (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Crystalline empowerment embraces the contradictions and tensions that give meaning to discourses and practices of resettlement. Crystalline structures can grow and change internally, while seemingly changing shapes when viewed from different angles. Therefore, crystalline empowerment implies an appreciation for difference without essentializing or construing empowerment as a unifying idea with one point of consensus. In this particular context, the word empowerment is used to describe programs, practices, and rhetoric that increases the agency of the target population.

Organizational tensions can be understood as competing or seemingly opposing

concepts that become paradoxical when one pole of the tension precludes the other (Tracy, 2004). While tensions is a broader term, contradictions and paradox are more specific terms in that they "encompass oppositional or bi-polar relationships" (Putnam, Fairhurst, & Banghart, 2016, p. 8). "Paradoxes differ from contradictions in that they create situations of almost impossible choice, hence the seeming irrationality or absurdity of the situation (Putnam, et. al., 2016, p. 12). Tensions result in feelings of uncertainty, frustration, indecision, and ambiguity (Putnam, et. al., 2016). For instance, at the GRA refugees and caseworkers experience a tension between adaptation and retention. On one hand, adaptation implies the process of change and retention can be thought of as resistance to those changes. Refugee resettlement manifests Baxter and Montgomery's (1996) classic tensions between stability and change in a unique way, describing the process of becoming familiar with a stable system after years and sometimes a lifetime of precarity and instability (Baxter, 2006). Raju, a senior caseworker and former refugee from Bhutan, explains the process of adapting life to Western systems of transportation, employment, and bureaucracy creates tension between the constraints of the system and the constraints of chaos. He explains that, **"**because this way you don't have to fight for a system, you don't have to do demonstrations. That's what people do there. Fighting the government. Here we already have a system. And then there are always complaints for anything, right? Some of us feel like something else, they don't like what somebody says, but just have to be a part of the system." Raju's apt framing of resettlement as adjusting to a system, rather than fighting for a system, reflects one of the unique tensions that structures resettlement work.

The following sections will discuss how discursive, material and place-based

tensions account for some of the important communicative constructions occurring within the GRA. Importantly, the distinction between the material and the discursive suggest separate noninteracting categories, however; the analysis attempts to highlight interweaving tensions and how they relate to form a multifaceted, seemingly contradictory structure. Distinguishing between material and discursive tensions may imply a false separation while ignoring the ways they are interdependent. My goal in this analysis is to provide insights that avoid such false separations. This section addresses the organizational discourses and practices regarding communal empowerment, technologies of empowerment, and place-based empowerment approaches in the Global Refugee Agency.

Tensions in Refugee Resettlement

Empowerment is fraught with contradiction and tension, reflecting conflicting meaning in different contexts. For example, discursive tension exists within the presentation of action. Who empowers whom? Who is the actor and who is the passive recipient of power? Framing the organization as the actor enabling another to access opportunities renders those being empowered as passive recipients receiving resources and education rather than the actors themselves, seizing new opportunities to actively participate in their future. This rhetorical choice matters because it can imply the passivity or power of the group, in this instance refugees, who are subject to empowerment programs and processes. In some circumstances this may undermine the importance of refugee, caseworker, and community effort and investment. After listening to the perspectives of GRA staff, observing, and participating, the idea of crystalline empowerment emerged as an umbrella metaphor that encompasses interpretations of the

organization's role, the individual role, and the community role in empowerment. The following sections identify tensions between passive/active empowerment roles, material/immaterial empowerment, and enabling and constraining effects of technology. For each of these tensions, I discuss ways in which community empowerment serves as a model for negotiating contextually specific practices and discourses.

Active/passive Tension

The tension between active and passive representations of empowerment was a defining emergent feature in the organizational vernacular. Staff members recognize the difficulty in communicatively keeping this tension in play. Lisa comments, "Yeah, I mean, I think we're careful about using empowerment, right? I think there's different theories on how you — if you empower someone, or they empower themselves. But I think bringing individuals, helping so that they're self-sufficient, so that they realize that they're empowered to do it on their own, yeah." Empowerment discourse that emphasizes organizational power and the passive state of the subject who is "being empowered" is positioned in tension with constructions of empowerment as an individually-centered process of self-achievement.

A failure to see the tension as productive can conceal a fundamental component of what empowerment programs intend to achieve; namely, self- and community care and independence. Statements that construct empowerment as completely bound up in self-sufficiency ignore the role of capacity building within the community so that dependence is generally perceived as a disadvantage. Empowerment is interpreted by the GRA as financial welfare and independence. The handbook explains the organization's approach to services and its objectives and understanding of empowerment, "Our core services are

predicated on the idea of 'empowerment.' To help refugees adapt we must remember the adage, 'to give a man a fish will feed him for a day, to teach a man to fish will feed him for a lifetime."

Lisa describes this as self-sufficiency, constructing the individual as the actor in the process of empowerment by referencing their own "realization" of "resourcefulness."

> Our mission as an organization is about self-sufficiency through resettlement, and self-sufficiency and empowerment and helping individuals realize their own resourcefulness, especially when they're facing different barriers like language and ability and things like that, and how to get around it…. Because it's so easy, even as staff to say, 'Oh, I'll just do it for you, I'll just call.' But really in those teachable moments much more — even though it might be ten times more the effort, but of helping individuals when possible and appropriate to learn how to do it, and to act it out themselves so that they begin to gain the confidence too. Because it's scary to call a doctor's office when you don't have a shared language, and when you feel very insecure of your language ability and your knowledge.

I repeatedly recorded the same impulse in my field notes. After making change at the front desk for a man who spoke very limited English, I reflected on the event in my field notes.

> I'm thinking now that it [making change] wasn't in line with GRA norms. I've noticed other caseworkers turning clients away in the lobby when they request a bus pass because they don't have the proper change. I just made change for him without telling him, he might have an unrealistic expectation that the desk will make change for him now. I know he needs to learn, it makes sense, someone might rip him off one day, but I felt compelled to help. Maybe it was me wanting to feel like I was helping.

The contradiction is palpable — to not help someone in order to help them. It might make logical sense in theory, but this practice of empowerment is at first an uncomfortable one and certainly a less personally rewarding one. I reflected on the possibility that I felt conflicted because I was a volunteer, and it was true that I wanted to help in any way I could, so turning someone away would have felt contrary to my intentions. Lisa, the volunteer coordinator, and I had many casual conversations about the frustration and

feelings involved with helping another help themselves and the value of that goal as a difficult one, but having long-term payoff. Participating in empowerment can, at times, feel paradoxically like not participating. It seems that empowerment also involves cultivating an individual sense of self efficacy and confidence in one's ability for both staff and refugees.

Community Empowerment

The community plays an important role in the overall ability for refugees to navigate new systems successfully. The knot between the GRA, the client, and the community's role in empowering refugees is not one that can be resolved or determined. If empowerment is understood more broadly as an increase in agency or opportunity, then community empowerment provides an approach that emphasizes the role of the refugee as a member of their community and the larger municipal, regional, and cultural context that involves the organization as well. People take care of themselves, and there will always be individuals who transition easily, who will be able to help the community learn English, find transportation, employment, form meaningful connections, and serve as leaders. Community empowerment involves capacity building and removes the focus from the organization and the individual by emphasizing the way that refugee communities take collective control over their own wellbeing and success.

Caseworkers acknowledge the importance of community and capacity building. Speaking about personal motivation and achieving successful resettlement, Adarsh explains that his Nepali clients engage in a process of "goal setting" where successful people are constructed as competent community leaders because of their ability to navigate U.S. culture and provide for themselves and their family. The illustration of

success inspires others to work hard and achieve material benchmarks of success, such as owning a car. The material goods symbolize success and the possibility and promise of the "American Dream." This constellation of material and discursive resources is possible through the communication connecting these signifiers.

However, drawing on community resources are important components in successfully teaching self-sufficiency, which can require knowing where to go for help outside of the organization and caseworker. Being able to depend on the community for help is an objective emphasized by caseworkers. Feysel recalled explaining to a client,

> Finally I was like hey, listen, I got to get up in the morning to go to work, and it's not really fair for me to be helping you out with this stuff because I got to wake up in the morning. If you guys need help, stop by my office. If not, then you know, walk down to this grocery store, this Somali grocery store, and there are a bunch of people there that speak English that are willing to help you guys, so.

Feysel is talking about the common request to translate a document received in the mail, and that rather than relying on the caseworker, the client should draw on the resources of people in the community. Several studies suggest the importance of community empowerment, finding success through linguistic and technical training (Viñas-de-Puig, Balna, & Benedicto, 2012), Chinese spousal empowerment during a transition to Taiwan (Momesso & Sun, 2010), and awareness of gender inequality in Kenyan communities (Mogambi & Ochola, 2015).

Community empowerment as a productive focus for individual and organizational objectives has already been recognized as effective in bilingual/immersion education (Tuafuti & McCaffrey, 2005). The analysis reveals that community empowerment is part of a critical vocabulary that can describe the conditions under which people are able to partially but significantly participate in the direction and condition of their own lives.

Material/immaterial Empowerment

Like many humanitarian approaches to empowerment (i.e., Papa, Auwal, & Singhal, 1997), microenterprise, market-based, and economic empowerment models are primary methods in refugee resettlement. The GRA is involved in the piloting or full time sponsorship of five distinct activities aimed at material empowerment: Basic needs (housing, healthcare, food, etc.), the Goat Project, Microenterprise, Community Garden, and the Kitchen Incubator. While the caseworker is primarily responsible for facilitating basic needs, the Goat Project was established by Burundi, Somali Bajuni, and Somali Bantu volunteers who raise a growing herd of Boer goats for Halal dairy and meat products in addition to controlling weeds and reducing wildfire dangers. The Microenterprise program lends up to $10,000 to refugees for small business start-ups. The Community Garden program promotes urban community gardening by giving plots to refugee farmers and facilitating farmers markets in food deserts, while the Kitchen Incubator provides training and mentorship for entrepreneurs starting restaurants, food trucks, packaged items, and catering businesses. These programs navigate the tension between providing material resources with the intangible support that is equally important.

The importance of being self-sufficient is immediately apparent upon arrival to the United States. Incoming refugees are first required to complete a Resettlement/Self-Sufficiency Plan aimed at financial independence. The Resettlement Self-Sufficiency Plan is a document that is filed in part to track grant objectives. It reads:

> A Resettlement/Self-Sufficiency Plan must be created to detail the projected time frames and steps to be taken by the client, the agency, his/her family to work toward the earliest possible employment and self-sufficiency for the family, including strategies to remove any barriers to self-sufficiency and amount of

earnings necessary to be self-sufficient as shown in the signed budget (p. 1).

Self-sufficiency is essentially a balanced budget, and the organization's construction of empowerment is rooted in self-sufficiency. The importance of material empowerment is unquestionable, and the donation and distribution of goods is absolutely critical to meet basic needs. Ryan references the difference in the type of work he does because it is material or "physical."

> The people you see every day and the opportunities that I get to provide is more physical in the way that – bicycles, to computers, things like that, for refugees and so it's really easy to see the direction and kind of the way that you're assisting. Other times it's like Matching Grant and things like that. I mean obviously people are grateful for that, but isn't as easy to see. A tangible, something that is handed over. So it's different in that way.

Material empowerment is the direct provision of physical resources, such as transportation, a paycheck, donations, furniture, free nutritious, and familiar food, and so on. Matching Grant can pay for "job club" every week to increase the odds that refugees might gain employment, but Ryan expresses a feeling that these are different objectives. Matching grants are funds provided by the federal government so that the nonprofit is responsible for only half of the costs associated with providing those services. Material empowerment is one face of empowerment, and each of these resources contributes to refugees having a more complex and nuanced ability to "do otherwise" or make significant choices, for themselves and their families. Like a crystal is represented by the holistic inclusion of its myriad different faces or different aspects, so are the possibilities for empowerment programs. In this way, the crystalline texture of empowerment implies that expanding the number of relevant experiences and resources is useful in negotiating tensions.

Technologies of (Dis)empowerment

The distribution of goods is a practical concern, but although there are only so many cell phones or laptops to distribute, staff workers can and do make and discuss their strategic choices about the process. The GRA's practices have been thoughtfully organized to allocate technology in resistance to patriarchy. Mike, whose family came as refugees from Bhutan, is now working at the GRA. He expressed his conscious distribution of the cell phone to resist patriarchy by giving women control over technology and assigning them as the point of contact between the family and the resettlement office.

> So anything that comes, when we give the phone, we give to PA [Principle Applicant; the "head of the house"]. So that means he is getting the phone always. So personally I don't do that. I give the phone to wife, you know? And the phone will be on her name. So I will tell them, "This one is for her, this is not for you." So that they will be like, wife is carrying the phone so that I can call her. And if anything is with the husband, I'll tell, "Your husband has appointment tomorrow at GRA. Just tell him to come to the office." "Okay, I'm there."

Practices of distribution can determine the social capital women can access, and Mike recognizes this. Social capital in regards to mobile technology can be thought of as the use of cell phones for information sharing, bonding, and networking that helps create a "mutually supportive society" (Cambell & Kwak, 2010, p. 436). Mike's attempt at subverting patriarchal norms governing resource distribution is met with some "negative" feelings. He explains, "they're okay. They don't care sometime. I think sometime they may feel negative, like caseworker is male, and he give the phone to my wife, and says calling to my wife [sic]. And they might think that way, but that's okay, they cannot come to me and complain about that." Mike's statement reflects the confidence in organizational protection, his decision to give cell phones to the wife was approved or

otherwise beyond reprisal.

However, organizational restrictions prevent GRA workers from granting resources to some of the most qualified individuals. The restrictions that cut off refugees after one year means some of the most well-adjusted people do not get to participate in "empowerment" programs. Speaking about the microenterprise restrictions, Padma comments about not being able to assist the better qualified candidate because she was not eligible.

> And it's kind of — the other one, she was the one who could actually — she's been here for a little longer, so any question I asked she could really interpret it. I mean, not just language wise, but just an understanding. And I was just thinking, you know, she's probably more qualified to start a business, but she's not eligible. And it is very frustrating. So the program has some frustrations.

These frustrations are typical of organizational "bright lines" that draw distinctions and deadlines for the sake of efficiency. At some point, refugees are no longer eligible, which may be counterproductive to the overall programmatic goals if they are concerned with community empowerment.

Enabling/constraining

Technology is both enabling and constraining. It can help refugees navigate a world that is largely mediated, access bus routes, translate documents, find information about international law, apply for a job, speak with family, and earn a degree. It is also self-limiting, subject to contextual appropriateness, user familiarity, security concerns, and technological limitations. As long as clients know how to use technology, they can be enabled by it. For instance, Raju talks about his "smart" clients who have phones and know how to use them.

> If they don't answer the phone, I can send the message. And if they are at work, they can see it at break time, and they will reply to me. And even another thing like you know, for example, nowadays, the clients becoming so smart. And they have a letter coming to their home. They don't know what that letter means, you know, and what they do? They click the picture of the letter and send it to me. And I will say what is there, and I will call them, "This letter is for this one, you need to bring this thing," or "this is nothing, you just discard this letter."

Similarly, technology is also discussed as a means of eliminating or reducing bureaucracy. Participants in the Goat Project as well as GRA caseworkers suggest that debit cards could streamline the funds and approval process for that program beforehand to save time. Technology is generally discussed as a tool of efficiency. Where in the past, clients would have to wait at the office to see the caseworker to ask questions, technology enables individuals to significantly increase the efficiency of their communication. Raju describes the dramatic difference that smart phones make to increase the ease of communication.

> And for me, I don't have any problem with communicating with the clients. Because like everybody has cell phone. Everybody has a smart phone. If I don't -- if they don't answering their phone, I can just text them, reminding them of an appointment or whatever they need to be done.

Technology is simultaneously constraining for GRA staff members. For instance, the office is organized spatially as a front desk and lobby area, with a hallway, offices, and a large warehouse room divided into small cubicles and one conference area. Each office is equipped with a computer and sometimes chairs for clients to sit. However, Scott found that his need to access the main hard drive at his computer was limiting, when his work was not always grounded at a desk. Technological constraints were mentioned in the interviews. Scott also mentions that he would like a laptop and more technology so he could work from anywhere. He found the office to be a confining and unnecessary space, having previously worked as a journalist in West Virginia and now being oriented around

the Community Garden initiative.

> I would like a laptop and some more technology so that I could work from anywhere, really. That would be nice… But I think just being able to switch it up. Because I'm so tethered to that, because that's where all my programs are. That's where QuickBooks is. That's where my Z drive is. I have to have access to that thing.

Increased reliance on technology can make bureaucracies more efficient, but also make people less able to work wherever they are needed. The security system that protects the Z drive is grounded in local access networks, so they are not available outside of the office. The technology structures work in a way by making it conform to certain requirements which produce a one-size-fits-all model for all staff to work out of the office cubicles with desktops. Scott's work is primarily in the Community Garden roughly 15 miles away, making this model ineffective at addressing his personal needs.

The material provision of technology can be used to enable women to access information and act as the principle liaison for the family. The addition of technology that would make the workplace mobile would allow the already mobile caseworkers to work from anywhere, instead of returning back to the office each time a form or personal information needs to be accessed. In this way, the discussion around technology manifests the material consequences of tension between control and autonomy.

Finally, technology intersects with community building as it is also discussed as a tool for facilitating social capital and assisting refugees in building a network of trust so that others will feel assured that they will be safe in the United States. Raju describes how he communicated with people to give them confidence in their decision to leave the relative safety of the camp.

> The main reason we are contacting is like we are the like six or seven — like we are in the first group. So people are expecting how is the life in America back in

> the country, you know? And we have to call them and tell them, hey, we are good, everything is normal here. And we are telling them you need to come here. At least we can get money and often food. And you don't have to struggle, what are you going to eat tomorrow? So we are communicating like that way, you know? So, because of the communication, a lot of people came here. Like if we don't have those cell phone, if you don't have any means of technology, means of communication, then there's still most of the people are behind.

Raju's ability to communicate with his friends and family in Bhutan allowed the formation of community ties to exist across time and spatial limitations. These networks are self-reinforcing and can communicate a sense of encouragement and support. In these cases, technology is a medium of empowerment when it is used to facilitate agency or the ability to do, say and self-represent in new ways within transnational networks.

Places of Empowerment

Places of empowerment are also tied up in the material aspects of empowerment. Resettlement involves changing places and living conditions entirely, which can be a traumatic and difficult process. "From harm to home" discursively constructs certain places as dangerous and others as safe. However, removing one from danger does not mean that they are in places that enable the full ability to exercise choices and personal agency. There is more to empowerment than removing refugees from harm's way. Instead, the GRA engages in the active production of places of empowerment for refugees with specific skills in order to meet culturally significant needs. Hussein acknowledges the ineffectiveness of simply putting a refugee in a safer environment and not addressing communication barriers that allow for interactions within the community.

> But I remember just came to my mind, one of my clients, she kind of, because of the culture of the people here, and the language, she is very scared about communicating with people. She don't go outside and she don't talk to people. She can't go for example, sit in a cafe. Her life is always just go to shop, buy stuff, and then back. Or to go to her family, visit them. She have a brother here.

> So she go to their house and then back. And it's very hard for them to convince them and tell them like try your best to communicate with people.

Without addressing communication barriers, refugees may not be able or willing to interact meaningfully in their new surroundings. If they continue to feel unsafe or not confident in their abilities, in this context empowerment may entail providing a wealth of options and choices without informing the individual about which choices to make. Rather, the GRA has successfully piloted three place-based empowerment initiatives: (1) the Goat Project, (2) the Community Garden, and (3) the Kitchen Incubator. Meanings around each of these places are mobilized in order to construct refugees as experts, skilled, and having unique abilities and experiences. Of course, each of these place-based discourses result in tensions that occur in the process of constructing places as empowering.

The Goat Project

First, the Goat Project incorporates community volunteer labor, self-sustainable income generating abilities, and meets a culturally specific need for Halal products that is not readily available in the surrounding areas. Additionally, the type of goat used has been farmed by Burundi, and Somali Bantu and Bajuni refugee populations, so the volunteer labor is uniquely skilled and well prepared to engage in this project. Further, it is a product of the direct self-determined initiative of Somali communities after they approached the director of the GRA in 2013. Finally, the Goat Project is designed to be fully financially sustainable.

> Another partner in the project, I think, was like — Gerald was talking to him and was like, why not do this weed control thing? It's really popular back East, around the west coast of California, not really here. That's, like, I guess, how employees will be funded, ideally. And then, be able to sell goat milk.

In addition to performing weed control, the empty lot was donated by a local mining company, where the goats have plenty of space. The infrastructure was built by refugees who routinely solicit volunteers in the Somali and Nepali apartment complexes. The market-based solution is touted as a natural solution to weed control and wildfire management while providing a service to an underrepresented population.

The Community Garden

The Community Garden is mobilized as a second place of empowerment. The intentional placement of the garden in the middle of an urban food desert materially and visually interrupts a pattern of oppression and malnutrition by providing fresh vegetables and a safe place to work outside. The Community Garden is another place that strategically positions refugees as offering unique experience, skills, and contributions. Jacob describes the financial and cultural importance of the garden.

> Because quite honestly, when you talk about food security and food justice, maybe for you and I, that's going to the grocery store, but a lot of these folks here at the GRA are from so much disparate climates that they don't eat the stuff that we eat. And so we're actually growing the stuff that they eat. And that's what's important. That's the big what's up is that they come out and eat pumpkin vines and miniature pumpkins and stuff like that I've just never eaten in my life before. And it's so important, because now, they're able to access those foods. And we're actually -- I hope what we're doing is we're making other farmers interested in growing some of these specialty ethnic crops so that not only can the farmer diversify and be more successful, revenue streams, get better. But also, bring more into that community. Because we can't supply the demand. We can't do it. We just can't do it. We're never going to be able to do it on the property that we're on right now. And that's a great feeling, because now we're always pushing forward and trying new things. Trying to expand and we haven't reached our limit.

Refugees' influence on the garden is discussed as an important revenue generator and innovating influence. This is in stark contrast to the discourse that constructs others as

passive, dependent subjects. In the context of the Community Garden, refugees cultivate resources themselves, materially participating in their own understandings of self-sufficiency and financial independence.

The Community Garden is also discussed as a source of control and expertise for women in particular. For example, Melissa explains that “I think that having — for the families in which the wife or the mother or the daughter or the grandmother is the kind of leader of that garden, there's a very clear understanding that that space and the decisions about that space belong in the woman's hand.” The Community Garden creates opportunities for women to own resources and the place to grow the nutritious food for her family. Another caseworker describes the way ownership, expertise and knowledge is constructed in what is referred to as “the wife’s space.”

> And sometimes it's, you know, it's the opposite, but there is a lot of, you know, I'll try to do an end of year evaluation with -- this happened yesterday, I was trying to — I was meeting with a man from Burma and I was like, "Hey, how did you feel about this?" And basically all of his answers were, "This is really my wife's space, she does most of the gardening. She has most of the knowledge. I can't answer these questions." And that's, you know, her culture's — that don't necessarily empower women outright — saying this is my wife's property. It's, you know, it's sort of empowerment.

Creating places where empowerment can happen as a result of the self-efficacy of refugees recognizes their agency and importance as consumers. The production or rendering of places as uniquely empowering enables discursive and practical resistance to the normative power dynamic between the organization with resources and the refugee with almost nothing.

Last, the Community Garden acts as an intercultural training ground of sorts, a type of forum for connecting with refugees. Staff members mention that they had to engage in some teachable moments and act as liaison for refugee voices when necessary.

> Sometimes it's making the environment a little more -- I don't know if hospitable is the right word, but there's even like certain nuances. So every garden as a refugee liaison so that's someone who helps me because I'm not in every garden, I'm not in every garden [inaudible] about meetings and rule changes. So they kind of communicate down on the ground stuff to me. And then I can help communicate to our clients. So in one garden on a board said you know, water issues, weeding issues, refugee issues. Well it's like, that's not really okay. Refugee issues on a board where a lot of refugees are gardening, who can read English. And whether or not they can read English. But, those kind of things. So doing gentle education, trying to -- so does that make sense?

The obvious distinction between refugees as *other* is represented through their singled-out identification on the board of meeting items. This reflects a tension between difference and similarity or autonomy and connection. Labelling "refugee issues" is the discursive construction of difference, while the garden is seen as a place for identifying these communication patterns and providing "gentle education." Similarly, the garden is a place for mediating conflicts regarding "rotting waste" and differences in perspective on ownership rights. In these ways, the Community Garden is a place that can serve as a catalyst for refugee empowerment.

The Kitchen Incubator

Finally, the Kitchen Incubator program was piloted first at another metropolitan area with success before being adapted by the GRA to address the local community needs. The Kitchen Incubator provides food safety training and entrepreneurial counseling to candidates interested in starting their own food service business. The incubator has successfully helped food trucks, catering businesses, and prepackaged products profit by providing a growing need for diverse types of food. GRA staff members are quick to describe their skill and quality in the kitchen.

> Yeah. So it's pretty — there's a lot to go over in the four to six months. I mean, most people that we're working with they have owned a food business in the past,

> but even if they have, it wasn't in the US, and so they're kind of coming as like blank slates. Generally, everyone, I mean, they can all cook and make an amazing product, but it's like all the business knowledge.

The kitchen provides a place for refugees to produce quality food and have local support for their business. Melissa comments that, “it's pretty great to see like we can have a woman who's — has her husband and her cousin — hey — cooking like for her, and she's the one like directing them.” It is important that women have control over material resources, but regarding the role of women a GRA staff member comments about the tension between personal choice and cultural constraint.

> But I think that specifically with the refugees in this community, part of it really very much is strongly a cultural piece. And if a woman in any culture says, "I do want to stay home and cook and take care of my children and clean, and I'm happy with that, and I feel like that's fulfilling me," I think that that's okay. And I don't think there should be any shame associated with that lifestyle regardless of who you are. But I think that us understanding when that — yeah. I think there's one level of it where it's like is that your choice, or is that something you're used to and that's just a cultural thing, or is it that you feel forced into make that decision, or do you just not — have you never experienced anything outside of it?

This comment highlights an important dimension in the concept of crystalline empowerment; the recognition that not all individuals will reflect all possible interpretations of empowerment at one time.

Norton (2008) critiques a tension-centered approach as limiting “in that it (a) overemphasizes the micro politics of resistance and (b) underemphasizes the specific characteristics and objectives of collective resistance,” this analysis provides a perspective on how resistance occurs and “to what end” (p. 529). Ethnographic field methods provide the tools to investigate tensions and practices as they combine to articulate meaning about empowerment initiatives. Community-based, rather than consumer-based, notions of empowerment emphasize the interdependence that enables

self-sufficiency and perceptions of independence. Vacillating between active and passive roles and material/immaterial forms, technologies and places of empowerment illustrate the crystalline and constantly changing nature of empowerment that can help recognize and address the needs for different people at different times.

Further, tension-centered and place-based empowerment practices suggest ways that resettlement is also a process of remaking and re-presenting the places and communities that refugees exist within. This study responds to Raka Shome's (2003) claim that recognizing patterns of dispossession and displacement should not be enough, but that researchers should engage in a contextual theorizing of space, place, and power. Refugee resettlement organizations are a specific and unique context for analyzing the ways that subjectivities are mobilized in certain spaces, and how space and place is mobilized to materially and rhetorically expand and constrain the agency of participants.

Now that tensions are identified in the practices and discourses of resettlement, Chapter 5 continues to build on this analysis by expounding on the implications of dominant representations in the organization. Entrepreneurial and consumer-centered representations of empowerment portray refugees as the active agent in the active/passive empowerment binary assuming that independence and self-sufficiency are universally accessible values. Chapter 6, then, provides a discussion of the theoretical, empirical, and practical implications of the entire analysis.

CHAPTER 5

IN SITU (DIS)EMPOWERMENT RHETORICS AND RHETORICAL AGENCY

Chapter 4 identified some of the ways that resettlement rhetoric conflates financial independence and self-sufficiency with empowerment. In this chapter, the analysis explores ways that centering self-sufficient and entrepreneurial notions of empowerment may carry with it important implications. Here, empowerment is treated as a discourse that within refugee resettlement contexts in the United States reproduce ideals about entrepreneurialism, independence, financial success, and consumerism. Cooper's (2007) definition of empowerment in the context of participatory action research in refugee camps is translatable and useful here, which is "to realize positive, creative capacities that may advance the capacities of individuals to achieve various goals" (p. 115). The realization of empowerment is accomplished through material and discursive change, but it does not necessarily resolve tensions that remain open to continual interpretation and negotiation. The definition also highlights the importance of personally understanding the particular capacities being realized as positive. This chapter identifies the ways that empowerment projects inevitably make assumptions about what is positive in a way that can be applied to people who do not share the same values. For instance, women who have always taken care of their children do not always feel empowered and resist the reallocation of their time to employment in the spirit of economic

empowerment. Still others cobbled together their own definitions of empowerment, as was the case with one refugee starting a successful daycare that found meaning by addressing community needs and personal financial needs, in a way that accommodated the desire to work from home.

This chapter explores the way representations of empowerment in discourse and practice can be homogenizing and participate in problematic neoliberal governmentalities, while also challenging the construction of normative places and highlighting the importance of rhetorical agency and the degree of choice involved in one's self presentation and representation. The following sections explore the implications of representations that reproduce tension between passive/active roles, by exploring the rhetorical fixtures of entrepreneurial, economic empowerment discourses and their implications. The analysis provides insight to the following research questions.

- *Research Question 2a:* How do *in situ* organizational rhetorics of resettlement assist and/or resist colonial discourses?
- *Research Question 2b:* How do rhetorical practices of resettlement participate in or challenge patriarchal and gendered neocolonialist discourses?
- *Research Question 2c:* How do Western *organizational rhetoric and practices*, in their representations of the world and of themselves, participate in or resist the legitimization of contemporary global power structures?

Empowerment policies have been subject to criticism that individual responsibility and economic sustainability models may leave out important aspects of what empowerment can mean (Sharma, 2008). In the context of refugee resettlement, empowerment discourse reflects primarily business-centered representations. The GRA

handbook states, “the office will provide comprehensive, *empowerment-based services*, *basic necessities that facilitate self-sufficiency,* and support as refugees make a safe transition from harm to home.” Empowerment in this instance implies the process of becoming self-sufficient and safe to act and to communicate freely. Independence and entrepreneurialism is encouraged through microenterprise lending and advising, the Goat Program, and the Community Garden. This chapter focuses on *in situ* rhetorics including vernacular, performative, and contingent interpretations of empowerment. Fragments of discourse and practices used by GRA staff, policies, and organizational documents create a larger message of what it means to be empowered. These discourses and practices include the interactions and organizational texts that construct meanings of empowerment. The performance of empowerment rhetoric in resettlement contexts advocate for a certain model of success based on consumerism, self-determination, and independence which can be both simultaneously empowering and limiting in scope and accessibility.

Empowerment may not be an exact reflection of neoliberal subjectivity, but it “articulates with neoliberal principles” when it advocates for individualism, work ethics, and equality (Sharma, 2008, p. xviii). The underlying values or implicit advocacies of the discourses and processes of humanitarian work may promote governmentalities that justify the allocation of resources for refugees. “Under neoliberalism, empowerment has quickly become a preferred tool with which to produce self-governing and self-caring social actors, orient them towards the free market, direct their behaviors toward entrepreneurial ends, and attach them to the project of rule” (Sharma, 2008, p. xx). This is certainly true within the refugee resettlement office, which relies on practices such as

regular check-ins regarding the job search, microenterprise programs, job club, and the Community Gardening projects to figure refugees as an example par excellence of empowerment through the American Dream of independence and financial freedom.

This chapter addresses the rhetorical implications of tensions and tropes of resettlement and empowerment. The analysis highlights particularly salient examples that illustrate the way that rhetorical agency intervenes, perpetuates, or alters dominant discourse and representations. Specifically, empowerment rhetoric (1) articulates with ableism and neoliberal tropes of entrepreneurialism, (2) mobilizes space and place as more than context, but as signifiers in themselves, and (3) highlights instances of rhetorical agency as a performative concept.

Neoliberal Tropes of Empowerment

Pramod Nayar (2010) describes the responsibility of postcolonial critics to "inquire into how the refugee is constructed within discourses of charity, responsibility and eligibility" (Nayar, 2010, p. 198). The GRA participates in constructions of resettlement and empowerment by foregrounding the abilities, expertise, and productivity of refugees in a way that both allows them to access more opportunities and better advocate for themselves as credible members of society, and defines empowerment primarily in economic terms. Certainly, material access to resources is important, but this analysis observes the rhetorical use of the American Dream, independence, and entrepreneurialism as ways of rendering refugees intelligible within a neoliberal society. Neoliberalism in this context might be understood as a vision of human development that automatically inducts each individual into 'a relational structure that provides for privatized resource provision' (Jakobsen, 2009, p. 224). Empowerment rhetoric plays a

role in reifying neoliberal structures and values, in this case inaugurating refugees as consumers playing an important part in the daily maintenance of Western economic dominance.

Doing humanitarian work with empowerment objectives requires extensive communication. Within the process of empowerment, various actors and contexts are constructed. The organization as a collective group of individual actors must represent its humanitarian mission to constituencies and donors, construct a strategic image of its target communities, and justify the tactics and effectiveness in order to guarantee their long term existence (Vestergaard, 2011). However, this study finds that daily practices and discourses give meaning to empowerment work and participate in larger historical projects that figure refugees as industrious, hard-working, and therefore valuable. For instance, microenterprise programs assist in the representation of refugees as diligent, independent, experts, entrepreneurial, and productive members of society. These initiatives effectively create both material and rhetorical resources that aid in the agency and ability of refugees to access power via decision making and a brand of credibility that articulates with neoliberal values. Refugee resettlement organizations are a site for the celebration and revival of the "American Dream" in a way that does materially improve the lives of individuals while contributing to larger nationalist tropes and values such as entrepreneurialism and consumerism.

The construction of refugees as empowered by increased access to resources and economic gain, and as entrepreneurial experts articulates with discourses of consumerism and commodification. Refugees are rarely identified as such, but are instead referred to as "clients" and the staff of the GRA as their "caseworkers." Although the term

"caseworker" is common across social work fields, the term "client" implies a business transaction or relationship that does not account for the difference in nonprofit labor. Still, the designation of client represents refugees as consumers and participants or members of the economic order, rather than as outsiders. Certainly, invoking consumer values of property rights and ownership can be materially and even socially beneficial for refugees who have previously had little access to financial resources. Communication, or the ability to communicate, is constructed as a critical capability and a resource. For instance, caseworkers described the inability to communicate as a particularly common and detrimental challenge. One woman who was experiencing social isolation and was cut off from communication and community building, became the subject of conversations describing and rationalizing the need for "empowerment." The loss of communication can result in the loss of connectedness, cultural familiarity, and the ability to navigate and live self-sustainable and independent lives. Moreover, these caseworker-client practices result in tensions between control and autonomy, or dependence and independence, in which both parties are constantly negotiating the extent to which they can or should rely on their caseworker or seek solutions independently.

On the other hand, participants reported that stories of individuals with financial success were motivational points of conversation among refugees. According to the interviewees, refugees can find encouragement to work by seeing one another display material accomplishments, consumer power, and financial stability. When I asked why different people respond differently to resettlement, a caseworker and refugee from Nepal responds that,

> They'll see other people how they are doing like, you know? Some people who came two years ago, they have a house. How he has a house? How is he driving

> the car? And then they'll know, yes, we need to work. If I don't work today, then I am unable to buy a house in two years. Or I am not able to buy a car in six month. So they have, I think, goal setting. And I have goal setting, you know? And I have goal setting that I have goal setting of buying a car in six month, and I did, I buy a car. And most of the Nepali client were able to work and who doesn't speak English, they have also goal setting. Yes, I have to work. I have to buy the car. I have to buy the house because if I don't do, then I may be like not competent as a community people.

Ken is discussing the way that material goods symbolize more than wealth, but successful transitioning into a new community and system. According to caseworkers, employment and financial independence are indicators of successful resettlement. Another member of the GRA staff describes a client as a good example of successful resettlement:

> Weis, let's talk about Weis. Weis is a self-sufficient guy. I never had any issues with him. Whenever I told him about anything, "Yes, I will do it," and he'd go directly — he has gone directly and doing it. We've never been in a problem with him. I never faced any kind of issues with him because he was totally self-sufficient.

Self-sufficiency is a primary objective in this statement and many other caseworkers echo this same idea. Independent refugees who require the least amount of support are models of successful resettlement. The discourse circulating within the office and between staff and clients reinforces economic empowerment as the privileged interpretation. One staff member reads his text message conversation with a client where they wish each other to be successful "millionaires." These discourses suggest that stable employment, active involvement in saving and financial planning, and participating in the economy are the most important ways of settling into a life in the United States.

From a critical rhetoric perspective, endorsing humanitarianism may leave the link between global power structures and inequality unquestioned. Recognizing that humanitarian work can participate in larger social structures of inequality is at least as important as recognizing the ways that different facets of empowerment can improve

material quality of life indicators such as access to nutritious food, healthcare, education, and income. To be clear, this study in no way attempts to devalue the work of stop gap humanitarianism. Providing life sustaining services is critical; however, we should also examine some potential alternative approaches to rendering those services.

Though economic empowerment is crucial in the context of our society, these performances of success communicate and advocate for an economic-centered model of empowerment that is admittedly not accessible to those who are not able to work in the traditional sense. Economic-based interpretations of empowerment assume that refugees should be capable of physical, entry-level labor, an assumption that can overlook populations that are differently abled. Disabilities, both mental and physical, often go unaddressed because of at least three communication barriers: (1) doctor-patient communication is lacking and translation services can be difficult to obtain, (2) cultural expressions of pain are different, and (3) negotiation of treatment can be unilateral and disempowering. The experiences of my friend Amina illustrate these obstacles, after she was severely injured in a car bomb that exploded next to the café she was at in Baghdad. She spoke very little English and the doctors struggled to communicate effectively. Diagnoses were trial and error and she struggled to express her symptoms. Several studies take issue with a market-based model of economic empowerment, pointing out that programs can structurally disincentivize health care for subaltern groups in India (Varman & Vikas, 2007), encourage predatory lending practices (Nadesan, 2010), and fail to challenge traditional gender roles (Khan & Bibi, 2011).

Being “able” is a primary part of being socially constructed as a good worker at the resettlement office. It is the first quality listed under the GRA’s definition of a “work

ready job seeker." The work ready checklist operationalizes the qualities of a work ready job seeker in order to ground the meaning of the term in concrete examples, observable qualities, accomplishments, and actions. The title of the document is "what does good look like?" Seeing and sensing the readiness of a refugee to enter the work force provides benchmarks and material ways of symbolizing a successful transition. The explanation of a "good" worker includes requirements that they would be able to communicate well both verbally and nonverbally. For example, the document describes a job seeker as one who "understands how to clearly communicate with customers, coworkers, and management, and demonstrates appropriate language, pronounces words clearly, answers questions directly, uses proper grammar, makes eye contact, uses appropriate body language, and avoids nervous behaviors.

Just as "native" individuals are subject to scrutiny as a "good citizen" of the empire, representations of refugee mobilize a rhetoric of entrepreneurialism and economic participation in order to qualify refugees as ethical figures or good citizens in the "postnational, globalized context" (Nayar, 2010, p. 199). On a local level, the mobilization of consumer subjectivities happens through resettlement discourses and practices that attempt to instill values of neoliberal independence and financial responsibility. Indeed, the treatment and experiences of refugees are used publicly to rhetorically construct the nation state as benevolent and innocent actors in the conflicts that create the conditions for large numbers of displaced people (McKinnon, 2011). This process of rendering the refugee as a productive member of society begins within local branches of humanitarian organizations and their enactment of tropes such as the American Dream. Resettlement rhetoric relies on tropes of entrepreneurialism,

independence and consumerism that can, in practice, valorize labor and exclude differently abled bodies.

Ableism and the American Dream

The American Dream can be understood as "social mobility and equal opportunity for wealth and freedom for every honest person" (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 381). Empowerment becomes equated with self-sufficiency through the discourse and the practices of GRA staff. To be sure, in this context and social order, economic empowerment is an important facet of accessing personal agency. However, focusing on ability does not make these opportunities within reach of many people with disabilities. Research suggests an important correlation between disability and poverty; notably that the United States has higher rates of poverty among people with disabilities than any other country in the Global North (Harpur, 2013). The correlation between ableism and poverty suggests that the "work harder" discourse of neoliberalism is employed at the intersection of these connected social locations.

For instance, one caseworker summarized the organizational approach to empowerment as one centered on ability:

> Our mission as an organization is about self-sufficiency through resettlement, and self-sufficiency and empowerment and helping individuals realize their own resourcefulness, especially when they're facing different barriers like language and ability and things like that, and how to get around it.

The strategy of diminishing the disability and focusing on what clients are capable of doing certainly can help refugees to see themselves as agentic and gain experience acting independently. However, it also can center ableist norms and assumptions about others, closing off constructions of agency for certain people.

Empowerment is not always simply a matter of providing opportunity to individuals; it also involves a communicative process of getting refugees to "buy into" the systems that they are learning to operate within. One caseworker, Haru, explains:

> Yeah, so I try to help them see the benefit of self-sufficiency, when I introduce my classes and cultural orientation. And I'll ask like if there's anyone who would like to keep being dependent on their caseworker or like having to ask someone else to make health appointments for them every time. And everyone's all like, "No, we don't want that." Like I kind of have a conversation about self-sufficiency and the clients are like, "Yeah, we want to learn how to do that stuff.

According to the GRA staff, they are not met with much resistance in getting refugees economically adjusted. Former refugees discussed being "hungry" and "ready" to work for what was described as a "normal," stable life. In this way, resettlement practices involve the daily reinforcement of values such as independence and financial prioritization which both materially enables refugees and provides a rhetorical resource to advocate for their belonging in the United States.

However, empowerment creates tension in praxis. The discursive formations are seemingly at odds with the everyday operations of empowerment, as illustrated in Brandon's statement below. Empowerment conveys positivity, opportunity, and possibility, while going to work every day can also mean long hours and time away from family and giving up old careers to start new ones. Brandon explains, "Like, I make it clear like when it's a couple, I make it clear like, you know, like the way I say it is, 'You both have to work,' right? I feel like I'm not empowering them. I feel like I'm like giving them more to do." In other words, Brandon is acknowledging the everyday struggle of work, especially for people who often start with low paying, hard labor jobs. Discourses of empowerment and resettlement can invoke notions of positive change, according to the participants, that in practice can feel more like a chore than a reason to celebrate

humanitarianism. Caseworkers construct views of empowerment that acknowledge the tension between the view of empowerment as thoroughly positive and the process of empowerment as fundamentally difficult and laborious.

Still "successful relocation" is directly related to the ability for one to perform economic models of empowerment. Abdul, a caseworker and former refugee from Iraq, illustrates the way that successful relocation is associated with the ability to get a job, speak English, and be self- sufficient:

> The first thing is that it's a lesson for the client how to control their lives, how to manage their lives, how to be self-sufficient. I'm talking about the people that they are really hard, no English, their ages is 54 years old. Ashwak is 21, but Ashwak, you know, she cannot be self-sufficient at all because her English is bad and — as well as her mom. She has a lot of issues. I'm talking to you like with the worst cases that I have. While I can compare them to the best cases that I have, I have a guy. His name is Muamar. He was self-sufficient within the first two, three months, a good guy. He really — he's a really good guy. Actually got himself a job after three months of his arrival.

Muamar is valued as a good guy because of his ability to provide for himself and his family. Not only does self-sufficiency determine someone's character, but it provides a test or measure that is used to draw comparisons.

Furthermore, cultural difference can be a site of resistance to neoliberal principles of equal access to employment and freedom to work. In particular, women who choose not to work may feel empowered to make decisions for the family and themselves without feeling stigmatized for not helping the family financially or fitting the expectations of an economically liberated new citizen who is now free to participate in the economy by working and earning and spending capital. The GRA staff express an explicitly validating approach to the multiplicity of possibilities that might account for resisting economic based models of empowerment that encourage all adult clients to get a

job as soon as possible. Veronica, a caseworker, made the following statement regarding the recognition and respect for cultural difference.

> I think that specifically with the refugees in this community, part of it really very much is strongly a cultural piece. And if a woman in any culture says, "I do want to stay home and cook and take care of my children and clean, and I'm happy with that, and I feel like that's fulfilling me," I think that that's okay. And I don't think there should be any shame associated with that lifestyle regardless of who you are. But I think that us understanding when that — yeah. I think there's one level of it where it's like is that your choice, or is that something you're used to and that's just a cultural thing, or is it that you feel forced into make that decision, or do you just not — have you never experienced anything outside of it? So I think there's a lot of angles in which we could look at it.

The recognition of different perspectives on empowerment is in line with the rhetoric of organizational documents that designate GRA staff as a type of "cultural broker." As brokers who negotiate cultural differences, participants discussed the difficulty in discerning between choice and oppression. Strategic ambiguity is useful when describing empowerment and its myriad of meanings. While difficult to determine in practice, the discussion of respect for difference exemplified in the excerpt from Veronica's interview resists the foreclosure of all contradicting performances of women's empowerment.

However, another important aspect of the GRA's rhetoric of empowerment is that ambiguity can be both strategic and confusing. Jerry represents his struggle attempting to communicate with women who may be experiencing violence or abuse:

> Yeah. So like, it's like be aware of this. *(Laughs)* And that was kind of it. And so I mean, I am looking out for it more than I was before, but like I mean what am I supposed to say? Like I know I'm supposed to say the GRA is a safe place -- and that's what I always tell clients -- the GRA is a safe place. If you ever have anything that you need to talk to us about, come talk to us about it. And I don't know if they don't get that, or if it's interpreted correctly. I don't know, you know?

Jerry has the best intentions of providing a safe space for clients, but he struggles in creating shared meaning about what that would actually look like. Further, Jerry's idea of

a safe space may be significantly different than the refugees he is working with. Recognition of the different articulations of empowerment that occur within organizations may reassure staff that each client's interpretation may be different.

Empowerment and Place-Based Rhetoric

Newly arrived refugees are often housed in development projects specifically manufactured for subsidized housing purposes. The south side of town has enclave communities, which are not quite similar to "ethnic enclaves" in the sense that the communities are not homogenous ethnic communities as much as they are diverse refugee communities (Akpinar, 2003). The daily practices of caseworkers involve locating housing for new refugees, for which they tend to draw on a set list of contacts that account for some of the clustering. Thus, refugees are intentionally relocated to areas that are safe and have family or people who speak their language and have some shared background.

Community gardening transgresses the normalized spatial practices associated with urban life. The Community Garden is a space intended for people within the local communities, especially refugees. Endres, Senda-Cook and Cozen (2014) identified "PARK(ing) installations" that challenged the normative use of parking spaces by turning them into a small park or a bench. In the same way thatPARK(ing) installations constitute a "temporary disruption of the normalized meaning of urban space and revealing the open possibilities for use of such space" (Endres, Senda-Cook, & Cozen, 2014), a community garden intervenes on one of the largest regional food deserts to facilitate rhetorical resources that physically disrupt dominant spatial practices. The practice of gardening in a food desert disrupts the disclosure of possibilities that limit the use of urban places. For

example, the Community Garden is significant because it invites a reimagining of the parking lot as a space for community gathering and trade. The garden and farmers market rehabilitate urban spaces and advocate for the reclaiming of practices that designate space with meaning and value. Justin describes the importance of reclaiming urban space by implementing markets that address specific cultural and community needs by creating a:

> Safe space for people to come and buy their food, but also to look at the space and go, Okay. When the market leaves, I still feel comfortable here. What else can we use this space for? And reimagining what that part of the county is. Because I mean the apartment complexes that're down there, I mean, this is dense stuff. This is the only green space in the darn area. I mean, there's a park. Millcreek is a couple miles away. But this little gem right down there is — no one uses it except for graffiti artists. Trying to bring that back.

The market and garden serve as disruptions in the normal graffiti filled empty parking lot by installing a "green space" that is out of place in the otherwise concrete urban environment. The market provides a sense of community and collaboration, and has been increasingly well attended and profitable. Rather than foreclosing on potential uses for the parking lot, the GRA challenges the normative use of the parking lot and institutes a project that invites community building, economic opportunities, and local solutions to address systemic causes of food deserts. Though this spatial, collective repurposing of the parking lot is temporary, it is also reoccurring, which the staff hope will have over time a lasting impact on the way people challenge the normative limitations of urban places.

Furthermore, certain places are constructed as forums for dominant identities, whereas other places are discussed as specifically for people who do not speak English or are not from the United States. Refugees are encouraged to gain confidence and experience interacting in places that are not for "other" people. Aaron explains:

> Except the only barrier they have is language. That's the only struggle they have. But I remember just came to my mind, one of my clients, she kind of, because of

> the culture of, the people here, and the language, she is very scared about communicating with people. She don't go outside and she don't talk to people. She can't go for example, sit in a cafe. Her life is always just go to shop, buy stuff, and then back. Or to go to her family, visit them. She have a brother here. So she go to their house and then back. And it's very hard for them to convince them and tell them like try your best to communicate with people. So we had something here, something called family mentors they kind of helpful with that, is that they go to the people and then they help them to go out to the market by themselves. I'm not saying like Rancho Market for other people only. But like taking them to other places. For example, like Walmart, Smiths. And that gives them a little bit of... encourage. Yeah.

This construction of space for certain identities reinforces ideas about who belongs and who does not. In this instance, the performances of white bodies in mundane places like supermarkets carry rhetorical force that centers whiteness, while transgressing these norms of place helps refugees perform inclusion and gain confidence through that experience. Hoops (2014) writes that, "media criticisms tend to privilege the symbolic, while de-emphasizing the embodied, contextualized, material, and co-constructed nature of whiteness. In other words, our understandings of whiteness often become detached from physical settings" (p. 194). These discourses refer to the embodied "privileged spatial practices" (Hoops, 2014) of the community that center whiteness and challenge normative relations of space. The discourse about the spatial practices that individuals engage in is also important in constructing meaning about their practices, such as only going to Rancho or ethnic markets, or only going to Smiths or Walmart (Hoops, 2014). The transgression of these norms is an act of resistance that challenge taken for granted decisions about the way we interact in our community.

Additionally, the use of space in the Community Garden entails powerful decisions that speak to the administrative assumptions, values, and approaches to the management of space and place. For instance, at the Community Garden, the allocation

of family plots may seem like a natural way to divide the space, but participants discussed conflicts that occurred between refugees and long-time residents of the community participating in the garden. Sam describes her role "bridging cultural misunderstandings" and "serving as liaison between other gardeners who are maybe English speaking or not familiar with refugee populations and kind of being that cultural link." One misunderstanding occurs over the practice of picking other plot's overripe produce – refugees who have lived through and continue to struggle with food insecurity will pick ripe produce before it rots on other's plots. However, the space could be used in any number of ways that would involve communal use and care for the garden. The a priori policies and dominant assumptions imposed on the Community Garden space limited its use but provided a familiar model focused on individual success and fairness.

Rhetoric, Agency, and Empowerment

Giddens (1984) defines agency as referring "not to the intentions people have in doing things but to their capability of doing those things in the first place, which is why agency implies power" (p. 9). Regarding power and resources he goes on to explain that, "resources are media through which power is exercised, as a routine element of the instantiation of the conduct in social reproduction" (Giddens, 1984, p. 16). Giddens' explanation of agency as a resourced capability is useful in looking at rhetorical agency as rhetorical capability, or the rhetorical means of determining representations. Staff experiences and personal observation of the programs, discourses, and practices, highlight how: (1) a lack of rhetorical agency, or the ability to communicate otherwise, impacts refugees lives and illustrates the importance of agency, and (2) how staff communicate to directly increase the accessibility of rhetorical agency for refugees and

intervene against dominant arrangements of power.

Rhetorical agency is at times most salient in its absence. When rhetorical agency, or the ability to make choices about personal communication and presentation, is severely limited, the consequences of unavoidable representations and self-presentations or performances can be impactful, even if not intentional. For instance, one's appearance may be something that we have little to no ability to change, but we may or may not have a voice in employing our representation strategically. The ability to appear and perform otherwise seems to be a particular aspect of rhetorical agency that is unique to resettlement contexts. Nonverbally, clothing is often used as an indication of culture or subculture, difference and similarity, while bodily trauma or signs of poor health can unfortunately impact whether an individual is read as a "good worker" despite the lack of intent. For instance, staff discussed the difficulty refugee's face when trying to find a job after years without access to dental and health care. Lana, a member of the medical team explains, "Some people like, for example, you know, you have to go find a job, right? And then, your appearance sometimes is important. So could you imagine somebody with no teeth? And I have young clients, so it's just unbelievable." The context of difference makes a difference – the place mediates how physical appearance is coded. In the employment setting, an expectation of "good worker" does not align with neglect and trauma. The inability to access material resources that influence credibility, perception of reliability, and so on, is a component of agency. Of course health care is a material resource, but it is also a rhetorical resource communicating vitality, reliability and hard work. The lack of control over self-representation illustrates the importance of personal rhetorical agency. In this instance, concepts such as voice and agency can be most salient

or consequential when they are clearly limited.

A characteristic of neoliberalism is the centering of normative capabilities and identities. Local rhetoric can participate in the project of global capitalism by promoting the idea that every individual is wholly responsible for their own personal well-being (Goodley, Lawthom, & Runswick-Cole, 2014; Mitchell, 2014). GRA staff members acknowledge the difficulties refugees face having survived trauma and instability and then shortly after adapting to an entirely new culture that may require new employment and work arrangements. Many of the refugees that I spoke with were highly skilled in their home country, working for example as a physicist, a teacher, information technology specialist, and so on. For others, it was their first time entering the job market after having lived in the camps for an extended period of time, sometimes their entire life, or having worked primarily in the home due to gender roles. Still, refugees who have survived situations in which they lacked access to basic healthcare are again subject to discrimination by employers. In Lana's comment above, she implicitly acknowledges the tendency for appearance to affect employment. This ableist impulse to hold the other liable for their appearance and capabilities in this instance naturalizes the privilege of citizenship and socioeconomic status in a way that can rationalize inequality. Mitchell (2014) explains that, "Those who don't adequately maintain their bodies are held personally responsible for their descent into the chaos of ill health and non-well-being profiting from the misfortunes of another; a parasitism of privilege allowed only to those who embody the normative capacities of neoliberal identities" (p. 3). In other words, from the perspective of dominant social locations, disability is constructed as an individual problem to be overcome via hard work or struggle with stereotypes of

dependency and “parasitism.”

However, there were many instances when participants intentionally performed or intervened on dominant ways of communicating in order to best accomplish their objectives. Victoria, an intern working with the mental health team explains how she and her coworkers actively choose a disposition and discourse of validation when confronting culturally different approaches to health.

> But the other thing that is important about this type of thing is that we're really to if someone says, "Yeah, I got see — I drink tea for this, or I go see the witchdoctor," or whatever, that's okay. Because saying, "Oh, no, no. Here we see Western doctors — we go sit in an office and talk to someone," that may mean nothing to that person, and that's invalidating the way they see as getting better. Some people might say, "I feel this way because of this, I'm cursed or I'm possessed." And that's valid. I may not believe in that myself, but that person believes in it. It's very much valid for them.

Many statements made by the staff indicated their collective struggle to be inclusive, and not view difference as an obstacle to overcome, but recognize as inherently valuable. Whereas a disposition that seeks to overcome alternative perspectives that do not align with that of the organization’s may engage in the erasure of difference by encouraging refugees to abandon their particular approaches to health, the participants actively participated in the affirmation and validation of alternative pathways to health. This provided the discursive space to affirm both Western and non-Western beliefs about healthcare in a way that did not necessarily undermine one or the other. Staff members at the GRA adopt a standpoint of cultural difference as a way of learning about someone and recognizing the importance of understanding over determining reality or persuading clients to abandon their own beliefs about health. Victoria indicates that language like “witchdoctor,” “curses,” and “possession” are deviant concepts in Western medicine, though they explicitly negotiate an alternative to the dichotomy between Western doctor

and witchdoctor. Victoria believes that culture has value, and she goes on to explain the importance of recognizing difference as a starting point for understanding what another person is experiencing in order to best address their needs.

Conclusion

In sum, this chapter takes an *in situ* approach to understanding how GRA discourse and practices: (1) articulate with ableist and neoliberal tropes of economic empowerment, (2) mobilize space and place, and (3) illustrate instances of rhetorical agency. Humanitarian organizations are important actors in the process of enabling better material realities for refugees and incorporating and producing economic subjectivities through discourse and meaning instantiated in space, place, and practice. This chapter looked at the implications of constructing empowerment as centered around consumerism, entrepreneurialism, place-based rhetoric and agency, while Chapter 4 explored emergent tensions as an alternative to myopically representing the practices and discourses of empowerment. In this way, the project collectively speaks against attempts to foreclose discussion, conflict, tension, and paradox, viewing these points of difference as inevitable and inexhaustible. Even taken for granted assumptions about what is empowering and effective may not be shared by everyone; empowerment is not only bounded but it is continually being organically realized. The final chapter discusses the theoretical and practical implications of the analysis, including directions for future research that will build on findings from this project.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This analysis illustrates how discursive and organizational tensions implicate larger structures of inequality with which resettlement practices are complicit, while recognizing potentialities of disruptions or challenges to dominant norms and Western consumer ontologies. Struggles over stability and change and passive/active empowerment create conditions of organizing amidst tensions within humanitarian contexts. The analysis focuses on ways individual representations challenge colonial legacies and systemic inequity. While Chapter 4 explores the many different ways that empowerment is constituted through tensions between active and passive positions, technologies and places, Chapter 5 identifies ways these representations can reinforce global imperial interests, mobilize space to disrupt dominant power relations, and limit or clear the conditions for intelligibility. This chapter provides theoretical interpretations of the analyses presented in the prior two chapters, synthesizing results of the organizational and rhetorical analyses to present the unique theoretical contributions of this dissertation. Toward that end, the following sections provide: (1) a brief history of resettlement as an enterprise of assimilation and discussion of how that history influences contemporary resettlement practices and discourse, (2) a theoretical explication of how a focus on tensions can speak to larger structures of power, (3) methodological developments and

limitations of the current project, and (4) practical insights for organizational members and planners who advocate for the interests of refugees.

Representations of humanitarian work and the strategies used may participate in a particular brand of empowerment that carries abliest, neoliberal ontological assumptions. This analysis illuminates the challenges of resettlement and the making of difference and subjectivities that assist imperial capitalist projects. Thus, a crystalline view of empowerment that is tension-centered and rhizomatic recognizes both the importance of the individuals with the compassion and motivation to reach refugee communities and the way that they perform a critical function in the reproduction of the humanitarian-state industry. The invisibility or namelessness of these tensions allow them to be coopted for their proximity to processes in which the state manifests itself, or is instantiated in the daily lives and narratives of its citizenry.

Empowerment practices can be paradoxical and constraints can be enabling and provide opportunities that did not exist before, as in the case of women entrepreneurs who used their perceived weaknesses as motivation to work hard and become successful (Gill & Ganesh, 2007). Within this humanitarian organization, tensions, contradiction, and paradox provide generative points for taking action, making changes, or responding to a perceived need. While resettlement workers and volunteers recognize their ability to intervene collectively and make a difference, they intentionally remain neutral in terms of partisan politics to encourage a broad base of support for resettlement efforts. Operating within a web of social, material, and discursive tensions, the GRA staff members perform rhetorical and logistical roles that enable refugees to use public transit, interview for jobs, budget, and pay bills.

One of the central contributions of this collective analysis is the concept of crystalline empowerment. Similar to Tracy and Tretheway's (2005) notion of the crystallized identity, crystalline empowerment describes the process of making and remaking the conditions of empowerment. The structure of crystalline empowerment provides a way of figuring the production of subjectivities and agency as a project that is constantly undergoing changes, being remineralized and strengthened, or chipped away by new experiences. The shape of crystalline formations is contingent upon the perspective from which it is viewed. For instance, English classes outside of the home were more difficult to get to and benefit from when refugees have disabilities or child care obligations, making them incredible sources of frustration for some and excellent opportunities for empowerment for others. Crystalline structures have many different angles and no single perspective that captures the entirety of the texture and challenges facing organizational practices aimed at empowerment. The crystalline metaphor describes the contradictions, continual negotiations, and interplay among the community, the organization, and the individual in empowerment processes. This concept also describes the way that participants organically adapt to how empowerment feels, or the internal crystallizing changes, and the ways that empowerment is performed or observed, which can be thought of as the external effects or facets of empowerment, such as getting a job, learning to express oneself, or having the ability to access necessary information.

Crystalline empowerment builds on the recognition of the bounded and contextually specific nature of empowerment. The concept of bounded empowerment in prior research recognizes the paradoxical tendency of discursive constraints to enable new possibilities (Gill & Ganesh, 2007; Mumby & Putnam, 1992). More specifically,

bounded empowerment is a term that "is radically intersected by context and experience, cannot be considered in absolute terms, and does not necessarily imply or result in radical democracy" (Gill & Ganesh, 2007, p. 289). Importantly, this definition foregrounds expectations of participation or democratic engagement as an outcome of empowerment, which is not always the case. Crystalline empowerment adds to this definition a consideration of the way that empowerment is realized through the negotiation of tensions and the construction of material and immaterial catalysts to agency. The GRA staff practiced reflexivity and perspective taking to consider alternative viewpoints and create spaces that met the specific needs of refugee communities, for instance, those who did not agree with Western medicine. The practice of hiring former refugees also contributed towards the development of an extremely diverse staff who are personally familiar with the particular needs of refugees and how to meet them. Many participants explained that they had more interactions with refugees with whom they shared a similar background. This ground-up perspective facilitated the formation of the Goat Project as well as a support group for Congolese women who had experienced violence and abuse. Empowerment remained open to interpretation through organizational practices that continually call into question or participate in multifaceted and context specific empowerment initiatives.

Bounded empowerment approaches to entrepreneurialism (e.g., Gill & Ganesh, 2007) take a constraint-centered perspective, while this analysis centers on empowerment practices that emphasize what refugees "can do, and not what they cannot do." This is a unique discourse around entrepreneurialism and resettlement that explicitly discards the value of recognizing constraints and challenges in the empowerment process. Although

bounded empowerment is certainly useful in considering the way that empowerment is not a unified or definitive idea – it is continually under consideration and being reinterpreted through both discourses and organizational practices.

Entrepreneurial discourse prioritizes consumerism, financial independence, self-sufficiency, and personal success, thereby rendering subjectivities as they are constituted through discourse (Gill & Ganesh, 2007; Tretheway, 2000). This study suggests that practices and extra-linguistic signifiers, such as the allocation of technology, participate in and challenge systems of meaning and power. The discourse and practices of empowerment by participants illustrated a process that is characterized by tensions between passive and active roles, change and stability, and difference and similarities.

Crystalline empowerment belies an approach to the process or doing of empowerment which is one of adaptation and contingency. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) describe a rhizome as a counter to linear, analytic patterns that trace origins and attempt to remediate past trauma rather than addressing the way it is recreated and represented in daily discourses and practices. A crystalline metaphor for empowerment, then, can still be seen as organic and rhizomatic in that it implies sporadic growth and is grounded in the lived experiences and daily reenactments of global power systems such as neocolonialism and imperialism. In order to recover the embodied meanings and organizational practices not entirely captured in existing texts, a focus on the lived performances and *in situ* rhetorics of resettlement generated a number of methodological and theoretical insights. One important outcome of the combined organizational and rhetorical analysis is the identification of historical discourses of resettlement that inform current discourses and practices of resettlement. According, before discussing the

theoretical contributions of a tension-based, crystalline approach to empowerment, I first provide a brief historical overview of resettlement discourse in the United States that influenced the analysis and findings.

A Brief History of Resettlement Discourse in the United States

Historically, the plight of refugees has resonated with deeply held American values, drawing comparisons to the European pilgrims who colonized North America while they escaped religious persecution. Beloved figures of the state such as Albert Einstein, Henry Kissinger, and Madeline Albright are retold as founders and supporters of resettlement institutions. The partnerships with state programs and nongovernmental resettlement organizations built a legacy of collaboration. Prior to World War II, social work services attempted to distinguish between immigrants and refugees, so as to demonstrate the "desirability for entry and fitness for integration" of those individuals who were fleeing conflict and not migrating by choice (Park, 2006, p. 776). Throughout the first half of the 21st century, discourse regarding refugees of Irish, German, and Scandinavian descent began reconciling what was previously constructed as undesirable bodies, transforming them into "Americans," while excluding other nationalities (Park, 2006). Similarly, refugee resettlement today valorizes entrepreneurialism and economic independence as benchmarks of good citizenship.

According to the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (2014), "the U.S. refugee resettlement program reflects the core values of the United States and our strong tradition of providing a safe haven for the oppressed" (p. 1). Social mobility and economic independence are American narratives that interpret and convey values reflected in the refugee resettlement programs. Ngyuen (2012, p. 142)

names “transnational multiculturalism” as conjoined forms of racial discourse predicated on ownership of the self as a condition for freedom and the representation of global imperial interests as neutral common goods. Certain refugee bodies are not rendered sufficient citizens by the state and these standards are used as the basis of selective exclusion and inclusion (McKinnon, 2011). Still, the values of diversity, independence, and opportunity are manifested in the historical retelling of positive refugee stories. In this way, seemingly benign and well intentioned resettlement rhetoric can participate in global power structures that perpetuate inequality.

Refugees still experience poverty despite discourses that focus on their contribution to society and ethic of hard work. They may be safe from imminent violence for the most part, but they are not free from the precarity of exclusion and dispossession. According to a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services report (Halpern, 2008), 70 to 86% of refugees reported some degree of employment but still had relatively low family income ($21,000 to $23,000). Ray Bush (2007) concludes that resistance to imperial global capital has “not objected simply to the principles of globalization *per se* but to the kind of globalization that has emerged: a world where 20 per cent of the richest people account for more than 85 per cent of global consumption and where those consumption patterns attack the world’s environment, challenge any autonomous activity and seek to universally spread commodity production” (p. 180). Refugees are integrated into the economic order by emphasizing their primary role as consumers in the world’s largest economy. As participants manage tensions, they skillfully negotiated alternative strategies to use economic empowerment models to meet culturally specific needs and achieve financial incentives, such as the Goat Project, Community Garden, Kitchen

Incubator, and Microenterprise programs. The analysis in no way attempts to represent a homogenizing view of resettlement practices. These discourses and practices are not comprehensive, but the contingent and improvised nature of them are important sites for the performance of international narratives that enact the interests of global imperialism.

Theoretical Developments

This analysis provides two specific theoretical contributions: 1) the figuring of refugee resettlement as a site that exposes the mechanisms and conditions under which neoliberal subjectivities are constructed, communicated, and re-presented, and 2) a crystalline view of empowerment that is theoretically productive and practically insightful. This analysis suggests that overall, refugee studies and critical organizational research should align with a telos of decoloniality, decentering the Western approach by asking, "For whom is theory constructed and why?" The following theoretical developments ground the theorization of resettlement in the experiences of those individuals in the field, negotiating competing interests, and zero-sum funding circumstances while making decisions about their communication and representations. Western research ontologies are challenged by the construction of spaces as intellectual yet still popular, public, and accessible. Theoretical contributions founded in the lived experiences of the people who must navigate the conditions being discussed confound elitist impulses within the academy to maintain knowledge construction as accessible only to those with higher education and methodological training. In this case, refugee resettlement practices are unquestionably good through the lens of the caseworkers who operate within a world where the organization's existence is an inevitability and a reality. In a world where refugees are in need of being resettled, there is a systemic need for

people who will step up to fulfill that role, particularly those who have had positive experiences with their caseworkers when they were resettled. An attention to the way global power structures recruit humanitarian rhetoric and a crystalline view of empowerment may inform organizational discourses and practices that can consciously and reflexively work to create more equitable resettlement experiences.

Transformations from Refugee to Economic Actor

The process of converting refugee to citizen-consumer is a process of indoctrination into the neoliberal order; an orientation into labor, referred to as economic empowerment of which the outcome should be financial independence. Discourses of entrepreneurialism implicitly promote consumption through the production of goods and services. This analysis offers a perspective on how embodied action, organizational practices, and place/space-based rhetoric create conditional, contingent, temporally situated subjectivities. For instance, the caseworker, acting as "cultural broker," is obligated to interpret and deliver translations so that the "client" is able to navigate their environment in the most effective way possible. Practice job interviewing, using public transit, and paying bills all play an important role in habituating newcomers to a particular subject performance that cooperates with neoliberalism.

Additionally, narratives of the upward mobility of refugees are useful reminders of "the disciplining intents and powers aimed at the subjection and subjectivization of the new friend of freedom, including given time and hospitality" (Ngyuen, 2012, p. 155-156). Caseworkers continually point to individuals who have found financial success as leaders in the community and examples for others to aspire towards and cultivate motivation. While this certainly improves the conditions and opportunities that are

accessible, it leaves uncomplicated the mechanics and logistics behind the system of international organizational networks that play various roles in maintaining the stability of the global economy.

One illustration of the way that rhetoric constructs and participates in the negotiation of tensions, and also agency, is the use of "client" and "caseworker" language. Clients are constructed or called into subjectivities as active participants in a contractual and primarily economic relationship with the resettlement agency. This enables refugees to make claims to their rights of service as a client, while it can simultaneously constrain a caseworker's ability to allocate their time effectively. Though not unproblematic, being a consumer does enable opportunities. The discourse and practices mobilized by clients and caseworkers illustrate how the rhetorical construction of relationships contributes to the agency of refugees and their ability to control their own self-presentations. The power dynamics implicated in the client-caseworker rhetoric effectively illustrates the discursive enactment or negotiation of the control/autonomy and dependent/independent tensions.

Further, crystalline empowerment theorizes agency as constituted among other rhetorical and historical systems of power that account for tensions between enablement and constraint. Contending with the power these preconditions have does not leave refugees and members of resettlement agencies as merely "bounded" by these conditions that shape empowerment (Gill & Ganesh, 2007), but also enabled in unique ways. Whether agency is understood as a resourced capability (Giddens, 1984), or a linguistic act with consequence (Butler, 1997; Medina, 2006), this analysis contributes an understanding of rhetorical agency as both bound and enabled by tensions. In this case,

empowerment rhetoric illustrates the ways that entrepreneurial discourse can recreate ableist ideals that strip certain bodies of their agency or ability to participate, while providing a physical space for the recontextualization of difference for those able to participate in the Community Garden, Goat Project, or Kitchen Incubator.

Further, when freedom is given in the form of asylum or citizenship it can serve as a constant reminder of a debt that must be paid back (Nguyen, 2012). In a similar way, refugees experience organizational practices that express the critical need to work as not only about survival, but the gift of being given the opportunity. Spaces like the Goat Project and the Community Garden reimagine who economic activity and capitalism more generally should serve and how these systems can facilitate different subjectivities that are accountable to local communities. In this way, the analysis builds on Nguyen's contribution to critical refugee studies by focusing on an understanding of how refugee subjectivities are rendered through empowerment rhetoric and organizational practices within a resettlement context.

In sum, postcolonial rhetoric exposes Western hegemonic discourses (Shome, 1996), which in its application to organizational communication recognizes, names, and decouples the colonial episteme from and within organizational practices. For instance, negotiations of the passive/active tension that always err on the side of an active emphasis on ability may obfuscate the ways that differently abled bodies are denied intelligibility within paradigms of labor, productivity, and efficiency. Entrepreneurialism is an appealing way to navigate the discursive tension between empowering the other and allowing others to empower themselves in that it valorizes independence. Discourses of entrepreneurialism proliferate fictions of complete independence that naturalize

ownership and dispossession, while appealing to those who recognize and are seeking a way to resolve the problematic gift of freedom (i.e., endowing others with empowerment as being inherently paradoxical). Participants and field notes reflect discourses that promote consumerism and participation in the economy via small business start-ups, the material effect of which is debt, ownership, and irreversible entrance as an agent in the economy.

Tensions in Empowerment Practices

Second, the crystalline metaphor for empowerment entails an acceptance of tensions and a prioritization of grounded theory in rethinking programs from a decolonial perspective. Funk, Stajduhar, and Purkis (2010) maintain that the Blue Cross creates an "illusion of empowerment" (p. 978) when the advertisement rhetoric both informs and promotes the strategic interests of the organization. The crystalline metaphor resists the dichotomous thinking suggested in illusion/reality and empowerment/disempowerment rhetoric, providing a useful heuristic for future inquiry into the method and effectiveness of programs aimed at empowerment. A crystal structure is organic and rhizomatic, but provides a more context-specific metaphor emphasizing how structural and discursive representations of empowerment can have a multitude of faces or sides that account for contradictions, tensions, and paradox. The metaphor is also a useful one in that it directs us to look for the organic developments of empowerment and resistance, such as alternative interpretations of empowerment that occur outside of the relationship between the powerful and the oppressed in order to create a space that complicates these binaries. A practice can be materially immediately enabling, such as the provision of technology, while also having material implications on the e-waste industry and environmental

pollution that results. This analysis supports research that frames empowerment as a dynamic process relying on the interplay of both material and rhetorical resources. For instance, technology is discussed as a tool of empowerment, in which its strategic distribution may challenge patriarchal norms. At the same time, these practices participate in global e-waste industries that expose already underrepresented and impoverished communities to highly toxic substances (Widmer, et. al., 2005). Humanitarianism is inherently provisional and thus encounters tensions between idealism and pragmatism. The entire system cannot and will not be challenged from an activity or enterprise that is funded by the state and enabled by existing paradigms of international relations and sovereignty. However, that is not to undermine the work or achievements of anyone, but to recognize the inherent tensions that result from practices and discourses of humanitarianism as they play out over time.

The use of tensions as a way of generating theory about empowerment provides an account of the aporetic nature of dis/empowerment and dispossession discourses (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013). While McKinnon (2011) found that non-Western women were used rhetorically to symbolize something about the nation-state, her work raises questions about how subjectivities are mobilized and embodied in the liminal work of the resettlement office. Chapter 4 identifies organizational practices, perspectives, and experiences that empower some and disempower others simultaneously. For instance, the bureaucracy of accessing federal loans for education prevented an Iraqi refugee with disabilities from signing up for higher education courses. This very structure is empowering and navigable to those who can access it, while unsurprisingly disempowering and discouraging to those who are excluded entirely.

Tensions provide a more productive way of analyzing organizational rhetoric, which can connect microdiscourses, practices, and representations with larger macro power structures, such as imperialism. Svirsky and Bignall (2012) explain that, "humanitarian organisations [. . .] can only grasp human life in the figure of bare and sacred life, and therefore, despite themselves, maintain a secret solidarity with the very power they ought to fight" (p. 185). Although the GRA staff participates in rhetorics of entrepreneurialism and consumerism in order to materially empower refugees, this is better understood as a decision made amidst and in light of tensions rather than a secret alliance with dominant power structures. Certainly, the negotiation of tensions may result in discourses or representations that reinforce the interests of the state and global imperial capital. However, without a coinciding interpretation of tensions facing the individual participants implicated in ableist or capitalist regimes, the knot of competing demands that account for their social constructions and perspectives cannot be fully untangled.

Approaching empowerment as a crystalline concept pays attention to the importance of ground-up projects and interests within refugee communities at large, such as the Goat Project. The Goat Project was proposed by the Somali-Bantu community leadership in an effort to raise halal goats in a way that also met the model requirements of economic empowerment and entrepreneurial innovation mandated by their resettlement. Furthermore, the analysis also contributes a more complex understanding of what empowerment can look like, and how a Western lens may obfuscate important and necessary alternatives to economic models of entrepreneurial independence. Considering that refugees are often represented in mainstream discourse through negative and dehumanizing rhetoric that tends to denigrate the existence and rights of the refugee

in non-native spaces (Leudar, Hayes, Nekvapil, & Baker, 2008), the Goat Project represents an important aspect of how empowerment is crystalline. Recognizing the tension between stability and change, crystalline empowerment implies the importance of both. The organization changed by taking on innovative pilot projects that organically developed and were culturally and uniquely well-suited to the groups within that community. This models the continual negotiation of tensions in a way that embrace organic changes as long as they fall within traditional notions of economic independence as empowerment. Within this context, the creation of places which recreate or mimic the homes, territories, food, and activities most familiar to refugees is an important form of resistance and an affirmation of difference. While an affinity for the familiar is not uncommon or particularly revolutionary, this analysis exposes the social construction of space and place postresettlement as an opportunity for resistance, dialogue, and community building.

Moreover, this dissertation contributes an understanding of the way that empowerment is entirely bound up in tensions, some which can only be recognized through the investigation of *in situ* practices where negotiations achieve contingent passive/active positions. For instance, discourses that gave priority to communal empowerment through the construction of places where identity, cultural knowledge, and difference became important signifiers. Places like the Goat Project and the urban garden Community Garden and farmers market take a "both, and" approach. This approach uses the language and representations of Western consumer subjectivities to the advantage of culturally specific requirements, such as rare produce and halal animal products. These can be liminal "third spaces" that "offer a sanctuary for dialogue or communicative

practices that seek energy from tensions, engage in ongoing interplay between opposites, and keep paradoxes open" (Putnam, Fairhurst & Banghurt, 2016, p. 68). Through the repurposing of places like empty parking lots to provide space for community gardens and farmers markets, these gatherings occupy space in resistance to the conditions that have allowed that area to persist as one of the largest urban food desserts in the United States.

According to Shome (2013), theory is about the imagination of better and different worlds. This project is very much about the theoretical conceptualization of what empowerment means in intercultural and international humanitarian organizational contexts, while providing a contingent theoretical model or vocabulary that accounts for empowerment as a tensions-filled process. Prior research indicates that time poverty alleviation programs have a paradoxical effect on women's empowerment; although they had more time and less demanding of a workload, this free time was primarily spent embroidering and engaging in childcare, which kept them in the home and fulfilling gender roles (Husseini, 2001). An outcome-based view of empowerment may miss moments of transformation or innovation in practice that indicate value in programs like time poverty alleviation or the Community Gardening and Goat Projects. Further, tensions are reflected in the rhetoric of empowerment as entrepreneurialism, independence, and self-sufficiency. The continual growth and crystallization of empowerment: (1) provides a way of describing the inherently paradoxical meaning and processes of enabling others to empower themselves, and (2) can continue to decenter Western norms of consumerism through the interdependence of local communities.

This study takes seriously the question posed by Cooper (2007) describing one of

the most important questions critics have raised, “for what are people empowered” (p. 106)? Refugees are subject to well-intentioned empowerment programs and discourses both for their own benefit and for the benefit of the state. Refugee and asylum status are figured more broadly as gifts of freedom by the state (McKinnon, 2011; Nguyen, 2012). However, empowerment discourses are filled with tensions that arise from practice, such as helping other help themselves which can feel like doing nothing, or education systems that are empowering to some and defeating to those who are differently abled.

Methodological Reflections

Organizational communication and rhetoric scholars can gain insights from the use of *in situ* rhetorical field work and ethnographic methods. Embodied rhetorical ethnographic practices demand an emphasis on experiential notation, self-reflexivity, and engaged participation to understand the field and the organization in question. This study supports research that has identified praxis based meanings of empowerment in refugee camps, which can only be understood through interactions and not a singular focus on already existing texts (Cooper, 2007). Without grounding the discussion of tensions in the organizational discourses and practices that occur in the field, conclusions may risk producing relatively fixed interpretations of the meaning of “empowerment” that excludes non-Western interpretations.

One of the productive ways that rhetoricians may contribute to the theorization of postcolonial rhetoric and the decentering of Western canons is the consideration of non-traditional texts (Hasian, 2001). This analysis found that discourse and processes occur simultaneously, both of which reinforce and challenge binaries, such as that between “harm” and “home.” Practices and places of empowerment can both disrupt and

participate in constructions of the United States as safe and the Global South as unequivocally dangerous. Community gardens disturb normative constructions of urban space and provide a place for the material and discursive construction of community and inclusion.

Further, spaces that are bound up in the control or homogenization of "consciousness and consumption" suggest that there are certain ways of being as an empowered citizen of a Western capitalist nation. The creation of these spaces does not necessarily provide radical rearticulations of resettlement, though they do open up small places for participation and potential resistance. Hasian (2001, p. 23) suggests that rhetoricians must investigate the influence of symbolic constructs that are coproduced by rhetors and audiences while keeping in mind that the meanings of these texts are not fixed or necessarily clear and recognizing the way that our reading of them may privilege Western perspectives and silence subaltern interpretations. The intentional inclusion of performances, mundane procedures, and everyday discourses follow a long tradition of alternative approaches that challenge where knowledge is obtained, which experiences and texts are important, and how theory is created.

However, academic studies are always limited by their linkage to colonial epistemes that privilege logocentric, Western presentations of research findings and results (Spivak, 1989). In practice, *in situ* research must be both open to alternative interpretations grounded in shared lived experiences as well as intentionally equipped to pursue and identify opportunities for alternative forms of meaning making. It is incredibly difficult to enter in to places and participate in processes without internalizing the logic and rendering it in problematic ways. One of the suggestions for future

rhetorical field methods is to consider the utility of methodological reflections in terms of genres of experiences that may be afforded or publicized to specific communities of people. For instance, Endres and Senda-Cook (2011) examine protest rhetoric; this study looks at *in situ* organizational rhetoric. Each of these sites entail different methods in practice – organizations proliferate rhetoric in different ways than do social movements or loosely affiliated activist networks. Rather than attempting to produce a fixed set of principles for different sites, which risks participating in the very constructions of space and place as static, I suggest actively engaging over time prior to the data collection in order to pay attention to the ways that vernacular rhetoric may be occurring out of sight from the privileged positionality of the researcher.

Practical Insights

While sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists, and cultural studies scholars have facilitated interdisciplinary discussions about refugees, communication scholars have shown less interest in the subject. There is even less research focusing on resettlement and the networks of humanitarian organizations that cooperate to make international diaspora possible and productive of "empowered" subjectivities. While extending theories on communicative tensions and postcolonial rhetoric to contextualize the larger discourses on resettlement, the analysis also presents practical insights regarding the implementation of technology,

As a preface, Spivak (1989) warns that the impulse to produce practical insights may fulfill a need for productivity making the project in some ways complicit with structures of inequality; however, the following suggestions attempt to highlight potentialities of resistance to these structures. Spivak maintains that a focus on praxis can

ameliorate the need to justify intellectual work as productive labor. Although that may be true of the following suggestions, they are useful to decenter or denaturalize norms of resettlement by identifying practical tensions and tracing the rhetorical implications in order to resist normative evaluations of how resettlement work should be done and why. Expanding the analysis to identify the negotiation of tensions and critical moments of resistance also decenters norms that adhere to methodological assumptions about the text and creates spaces to challenge global imperialism.

First, the recognition and negotiation of tensions has important implications, providing a broader view of community empowerment in a way that does not reify binary oppositions in passive and active discourses of resettlement. The speaker need not consolidate power and the agency to act freely as a commodity given by an organization, or an available option for all individuals willing to "take" responsibility for their empowerment. "Praxis, however, is not simply recognizing that tensions exist; rather it focuses on developing a discursive consciousness—a type of awareness in which actors can formulate in thought and words what is happening and reflect on why and how it occurs." (Putnam, Fairhurst, & Banghurt, 2016, p. 78). Aligning with this idea, I hope that the tension-centered crystalline approach to empowerment provides a point of reflection on the way that Western norms ascribe meaning to performances that participate in neoliberal values.

Still, one of the important aspects of research suggested by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2008) report regarding best practices in refugee resettlement is collecting feedback from those that have experienced the process of resettlement. In this regard, this study highlights two key suggestions for best practices

based on the inclusion of refugee perspectives: (1) hiring former refugees as caseworkers to better assist in the process and challenges that accompany resettlement, and (2) implementing technology-based empowerment strategies.

First, intentional hiring practices recruited resettlement caseworkers from former refugees, thereby providing a model for mobility in addition to a more equipped individual who is familiar with the process. Strategic recruiting is a way of "scaling up" the discourses of empowerment to extend participation structurally in addition to the direct improvement in quality of life, information, and skills (Cooper, 2007). Former refugee caseworkers reported navigating traditional and cultural expectations that caused tension between work and life boundaries. For instance, living in close proximity and within the same ethnic community, Hussein had to draw boundaries when his time was being monopolized by clients. Considering the nature of social work and the constraints of working in the nonprofit sector, some participants were simply exhausted and expressed frustration with the constant demands of their clients outside of work hours.

The difference in nonprofit labor is the lack of clear distinctions between the personal and professional, which leads nonprofit workers to experience many tensions between being restricted or open and friendly while still making sure that clients understand that as a caseworker they have other families to help. This is also true for users of technology and social media more specifically. While it is extremely empowering and helpful for refugees to be able to text or Facebook their caseworker with questions, the caseworker ends up feeling constantly "on call," and must draw clear boundaries or risk the collapse of personal and professional time. Overall, technology is an organizational and personal resource that exacerbates the tension between work-life

boundaries because it can be both exploitative and empowering (Kirby, Wieland, & McBride, 2006). For instance, research regarding mobile technologies at work indicates that they can increase job satisfaction and flexibility, while also encouraging availability and work outside of traditional work hours (Kirby, Wieland, & McBride, 2006). The unclear boundaries between personal and professional time can leave caseworkers expressing burnout, though they also report being increasingly more able to communicate and help their clients.

Finally, the implementation of technology-based empowerment programs may facilitate the interests of individuals who are differently abled or do not otherwise comport with the norms of economic empowerment. Harpur (2012) notes:

> The growth of the digital age has the potential of empowering persons with disabilities. A person who is unable to leave their bedroom can surf the internet and interact with people across the globe. Effectively, the digital commons has the potential of contributing to the emancipation of persons with disabilities from the charity model (p. 5).

While computers and computer literacy are not requirements, they could be especially useful resources for those who would like to take courses online or take advantage of language learning software. This study suggests that social capital can be a vital resource to already marginalized populations, such as women, when cell phones can enable underrepresented individuals to have access to information, social networks and contacts, and resources. When technology was strategically distributed to increase social capital for those with the least access to sources of agency, caseworkers indicated that "empowerment" could occur through otherwise mundane daily material practices. However, access to technology is not a simple solution to ableist discourse and norms. Moser (2006) cautions that instituting technological training and access can reinforce

binaries between able bodied and disabled individuals by rendering disabled bodies as lacking and finally "normal" and capable with the help of technology. While English as a Second Language software, apps, and online courses may be a useful tool for those who experience disability, it may also reinforce the message that refugees should fit in within their new communities in order to participate in the economy in normative ways. If technology is socially constructed as a "solution" to disability implying that differently abled bodies are a problem because they do not engage in normative labor or consumer activities, discourses of technology may reinforce, rather than deconstruct, ableism.

Limitations

As with all research endeavors, this project has several limitations. One of the clearest limitations of this study is its lack of refugee or client perspectives. While many attempts were made to collect interviews from refugee clients who had been referred to me by my caseworkers, most were declined. The interviews that were obtained from refugees were limited in their rich description, as discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3. However, this limitation was mitigated by the inclusion of caseworkers who were former refugees.

Another limitation is a result of the study's design and the nature of exploratory, grounded theory approaches. While significant research has addressed the issue of refugee resettlement discourse in the media and government reports (KhosraviNik, 2010; McKinnon, 2011), very little work has explored the practices and extra-linguistic, non-textual dimensions of resettlement rhetoric. For this reason, the study was designed to collect a wide range of experiences, observations, texts, and other data that represented empowerment in this particular context. Entrepreneurialism, consumerism, and

economic-centered social constructions emerged as primary themes in the performance and representation of empowerment. While this supplies an extremely large catalogue of data that allowed me to see which representations were thematically salient across the different data sets, it is also limiting in that the breadth of data collection also acts as a constraint.

Finally, language barriers prevented the interpretation of some spontaneous interactions and "insider" comments that occurred in the office. The GRA is a very diverse environment in which meetings are happening daily in multiple languages and dialects. Without the availability of translators or an ability to speak major languages like Arabic or Somali, developing insight was not impossible, but very limited. Body language and tone revealed the nature of the discussion, for example if it was a friendly interaction or if they were engaged in an argument, but not the subject or topic of discussion. In this way, I noted many exchanges without an ability to fully grasp what was occurring. In order to reduce this limitation, researchers in a similar diverse field may consider using audio recordings of interactions (that occur in public or are compliant with informed consent) and using these as a methodological tool for interviewing and member checking.

Future Directions

Future studies may find the interpretive exploration into resettlement and empowerment tensions useful in designing more narrowly focused research protocols. For instance, discourse analysts could generate more in-depth insight into the discursive figuring of active and passive roles in discussions of empowerment and the process of resettlement. Studies that find differential treatment between women refugees

(McKinnon, 2011) suggest that gender differences impact the way men and women are received as refugees by the state and could also impact the active and passive assignment of roles in empowerment discourse. While the GRA staff demonstrated self-reflexivity in their communication, participants were also very aware of gender equality initiatives that were being implemented by the international headquarters. This awareness of gender equality may not be characteristic of every resettlement agency. A broader sample of organizations and participants in different types of resettlement organizations, such as faith-based organizations, may reveal entirely different presentations of empowerment and gender equality.

Further, representations and practices of entrepreneurialism could be compiled for comparison to better understand how entrepreneurial empowerment might contrast or be deployed differently in refugee resettlement contexts. For instance, while Gill and Ganesh (2007) found that entrepreneurialism promoted aggressive and hyper-masculine discourse among women small business owners, that was not apparent in the data collected at the GRA. In fact, the microenterprise program serves almost an equal number of men and women, with women becoming increasingly more active each year. There may be rhetorically different features exhibited in different contexts, or the study may uncover some of the ways that gender differences are reified or naturalized in vernacular circulations of entrepreneurial discourse.

Conclusion

In sum, a crystalline view of empowerment identifies emergent, lived representations, and performances of empowerment as the defining features. The metaphor is a starting point for conceptualizing alternative goals to the resettlement

process. The meaning of empowerment is continually under contestation through practices and discourses that reinforce and/or dismantle normative narratives of empowerment, as with the entrepreneur or consumer subjectivities. This approach finds the tension between passive/active roles in the binary between who empowers whom productive and a starting point for discussion and organization. Accounting for tensions inherent in the resettlement and humanitarian context at least accomplishes more of a space for different viewpoints and potential changes. The interpretive chapter illustrates the tensions that make up the process of empowerment while critical rhetoric recognizes the ways that the practices and discourses embedded in processes of organizing for empowerment can exclude certain bodies and interpretations of what those outcomes look like. The implications tie together these ideas by offering crystalline empowerment as a metaphor for recognizing those inherent tensions, the processual nature of empowerment, and the perspectival reflections of empowerment. Furthermore, the spatial analysis of places of empowerment account for the ways that place both stands in as a rhetorical resource for constructing the expertise and value of refugee's role in the economy, as well as participating in the rhetoric of resettlement and community building.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Because our research protocol calls for semi-formal, unstructured interviews, there is no fixed interview script. Rather, some basic questions will be used to initiate or sustain conversation as needed, but research will be given latitude to ask follow-up and clarifying questions that help generate dialogue around the answers/themes generated by students during the focus group. That said, there are five broad categories of questions on which the interviewer will rely:

1. **Demographic/Background Questions**

- How would you describe yourself? Tell me a little bit about yourself.
- Is your current time in the U.S. your first time as a refugee (or caseworker)?
- What experiences led to you finding yourself displaced? Why did you leave your home?
- What are some of the biggest challenges you have faced since coming to Salt Lake City?
- Have there been any unexpected surprises?
- How has your experience helping refugees/or being a refugee changed you and your views of others?
    - (For GRA staff workers only): Why did you decide to come work at the GRA?

2. **Agency Specific Questions**

- Can you recall a time that you felt in control over your life and every day experiences? Can you identify any things that helped you feel that way?
- What is your experience with other refugees in the local area?
- What do you think the greater public thinks about you? What do you think about them?
- Are you part of a community of refugees? Tell me about that community. How does is it differ from your old community back home?

3. **Questions about Refugee Resettlement**

- Do you find significant differences between your home and here? If so, what the most significant differences? Similarities?
- What do you think about the practice of referring to refugees as “clients”? What do you think might be different about refugee and GRA interactions if refugees were referred to as “victims”? “Citizens?”

- How has your relationship with the GRA evolved since you arrived in Utah?
- What resettlement programs at the GRA do you find most helpful?
- What suggestions for improvements do you have?

4. Gender Communication Questions

- Do you identify as a woman, male or other gender? Do you think this aspect of your identity has any impact on your experiences as a refugee?
- Has your identity as a woman/male/transgender/other ever created challenges in your life?
- Do you feel that the GRA treats men and women equally? In what ways do they succeed and/or fail at equality?

5. Technology, Organizing and Empowerment

- What kinds of technology do you use and what do you like most about it? (Cell phones, laptops, etc.)
- Can you recall a time when you needed to use some type of technology and found it difficult? What kinds of challenges do you face learning and using technology?
- Do you participate in any online chat groups or communities? If so, why? What do you gain from this?

APPENDIX B

THEMATIC AND CONSTITUTIVE CODES

Thematic Categories	**Constitutive Codes**
Capacity Building	Celebrating accomplishments; community outreach; external agency partners; food, drink, consumption; problem solving; skills and abilities; technology; transportation
Caseworker-Refugee Relationships	Tensions
Challenges	Communication; economic; funding; health; language; office space; public opinion; technology; time and caseload; turnover
Cultural Differences	Cultural orientation; intervention in dominant culture; task sharing; time
Education	None
Employment	Identity; GRA jobs; post-refugee work; pre-refugee employment; stress and emotion
Empowerment	Agency; barriers; criteria and prerequisites; economic empowerment; populations in need; self-sufficiency
Gender	Communicating equality; cultural connections; gender empowerment
GRA Systems	Leadership; media; office culture; organizational change; place; procedures and policy; resettlement; training
Inequality	None
Magnitude of the Problem	None
Personal Background	Demographics; family; historical background; land of origin; reason for leaving; refugee camps; religion; value systems
Place	Community; specific locations
Public Opinion	None
Resettlement	Negative emotions; positive portrayals
Refugee Identity	None
Research	Uncertainty; self-reflection

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